

# **Speaking Their Language:**

An Evangelistic Message Sequence Aimed At  
Un-Churched, Disinterested Adolescents

A Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to manuscript an evangelistic sermon series aimed at un-churched, disinterested adolescents. These sermons are designed for use during an outreach camp setting.

To effectively create this sermon series, the author has reviewed the state of adolescent culture and written a theological framework for proclamation and incarnational ministry. A basic framework for creating evangelistic message sequences is offered and explained. Using the research on adolescent culture and the study on proclamation and incarnational ministry combined with the basic framework, an evangelistic camp message sequence and seven manuscripts have been designed and written.

In August of 2004, these sermons were presented during four different camp settings. They have been revised and were presented again in April 2006 and August 2006 during three different camp settings. The research on adolescent culture is also used during seminar settings.

## - CHAPTER ONE -

### INTRODUCTION

In America, twelve teenagers committed suicide today.

Tomorrow, twelve more will do the same thing.<sup>1</sup> This is a sad reflection of the teenagers' world. It's a world that is broken, filled with pain and often feels hopeless. Kids face a reality that is spinning out of control. Consider the following:

Every day in America –

- 130,000 adolescents bring guns to school
- 2,200 adolescents drop out of school
- 1,000 adolescents begin using alcohol
- 630 adolescents are robbed
- 15 adolescents are murdered
- 1,000 adolescents become mothers
- 500 adolescents begin using drugs
- 3,500 adolescents are assaulted
- 80 adolescents are raped<sup>2</sup>

Welcome to the world of teenagers, where reality often seems more surreal than real. Unfortunately, this crisis isn't endemic to the United States. Though the statistics will vary, the truth remains the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Dean Borgman, *Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 243.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Howe and William Strauss, *13th Generation: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?*, First Edition ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 3.

Teenagers around the world are broken, lost and live a life filled with pain.

But there is hope, and that hope is found in the message of Jesus. While social reforms, political programs and building projects continue to come and go; it is the body of Christ who wields the hope for the world's youth culture. With this knowledge, what is our responsibility as the body of Christ? God provides an answer to this question with great clarity! We are commanded to take part in the Great Commission, which commits us to making disciples by teaching people to respond to all that Christ commanded.<sup>3</sup> This is not a suggestion. It is a mandate. It is a command. But where do we begin? Who should be the next disciple?

As a little boy I loved to go fishing with my Dad. We would use a cane pole and worms for bait. When the fish were biting, nothing could beat the time out on the lake. When they weren't, the experience was anything but fun! The secret was going where the fish were. Instead of waiting for them to come to us, we took the time and effort to discover the best fishing holes possible. As fishers of men, we have to do the same thing. We have to enter the world of the lost. Ultimately, we are called to be fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium! We have to throw our hooks out or we will never reel them in to shore! The lost will only be found if we meet them on common ground. In today's world, the best fishing is found among the adolescent culture. We will never find a better

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

fishing hole than the high school lunchroom or the Friday night football game. You can throw your hook in any direction and you can't miss. The un-churched, disinterested teenager is found in every nook and cranny.

Why is the culture of adolescents such a significant target group? Seventy-seven percent of all self-professing Christians made their decision to follow Christ by the age of twenty-one.<sup>4</sup> Young people are obviously receptive to the Gospel and they offer the greatest opportunity for expanding God's Kingdom. But if the world of adolescents is the best place to go fishing, how do we catch them?

### **Stating the Problem**

First, it is imperative to understand that the Gospel of Jesus Christ still changes lives. The Gospel is still the world's only hope. But if it is to do its work we have to communicate the message in a way young people understand. Only when they understand and respond will their lives be transformed.

A wise fisherman carefully chooses his bait because he knows and understands the creature he seeks. Such is the case for reaching out to lost teenagers. If we want to win their trust, we have to use the right bait. If we want them to understand the Gospel, we have to deliver the message in the most winsome and engaging way possible. Kids don't want to be bored to death. They want to connect and understand. They want to listen to adults who speak their language. Jim Rayburn, the

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<sup>4</sup> Barna Group, "Evangelism Is Most Effective among Kids," in *The Barna Update* (2004), 1.

founder of Young Life, was correct when he declared, “It’s a sin to bore a kid with the Gospel!”<sup>5</sup> Rayburn knew there is nothing boring about the Gospel. In fact, it is absolutely exhilarating! Yet kids often feel the church has nothing to offer them and there can’t be anything interesting about someone named Jesus who lived 2000 years ago. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

And by the way, speaking their language doesn’t mean compromising the truth. If anything, it means being honest, sincere and forthright. When teenagers hear the Gospel for the first time, it should be delivered in a way that it captures their hearts and captivates their minds. Anyone who communicates the Gospel in a preaching or teaching setting has the moral obligation to communicate the message in an effective manner. There is no business more serious than communicating the message of Christ.

To my dismay, I have often seen youth ministry looked upon as a stepping-stone or an entry-level position into ministry. It is important to note that effective youth ministers do not have to be young and fresh out of college. Men and women of all ages can be dynamic youth workers. Armed with years of life experience, older and wiser youth ministers may be the most effective of all.

With a low view of youth ministry also comes an indifference towards speaking to young people. At this point, the speaker is no longer

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<sup>5</sup> Jim Rayburn, *Dance, Children, Dance* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1984), Inside cover.



effective and neither is his or her presentation of the Gospel. The very Gospel that wields the power of salvation now limps along because someone failed to see the depth and need of the adolescent heart.<sup>6</sup> When this happens, kids find themselves bored and disregarded. This way of presenting Jesus is anything but magnetic.

Unfortunately, many youth pastors, youth ministers and youth workers have not been trained in the art of communication. Because teenagers are often the low priority, the need for training and developing our youth leaders to communicate effectively has been overlooked. Many sincere and devoted leaders would love to communicate the most effective message possible, but they need some help getting there. This project is meant to be a tool to assist youth workers and leaders in their journey to becoming effective evangelistic communicators.

Because youth ministers will have many opportunities to present the Gospel in public settings, it's critical that they become effective communicators of the Gospel. They must be prepared and willing to "preach the word in season and out of season."<sup>7</sup> If the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are truly life-changing, then it is imperative that we convey the story in the most sincere and effective way possible. We must be able to share the Gospel in such a way that the message will transform young lives. Youth ministers need to be good theologians, who are relationally engaging and they need to be quality communicators. It

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 1:16.

<sup>7</sup> II Timothy 4:2.

is essential for anyone who presents the Gospel to lost teenagers to be able to prepare and deliver an evangelistic message that unfolds the Gospel and breathes life into our young, hurting friends.

It is equally critical for youth ministers to develop a solid and progressive message sequence. The message sequence is a series of sermons or messages that build on each other. They are delivered in a progressive and logical order with the intent of painting the fullest picture of the Gospel message possible. Within this sequence, each message must be engaging, theologically sound and spoken in a language that kids will understand.

### **Scope of the Project**

Teenagers are in desperate need and the Gospel is able to transform their lives. It is the intent of this project to provide to the field of homiletics an evangelistic message sequence aimed at presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to disinterested, un-churched adolescents between the ages of fourteen and nineteen. This sequence will include seven sermons comprising the following topics:

- An introduction to the person of Christ
- The unconditional love of Christ
- The need of mankind
- The condition of sin
- The death of Christ and his substitutionary atonement
- The resurrection and appropriation of Christ

- Life with Christ

This sequence is designed for presentation in an outreach camp setting. Specifically, it is designed for a Young Life camp setting. It is assumed that the presenter will speak seven days consecutively, which is typical during most Young Life summer camp venues.

Though this project is directed primarily towards a Young Life audience, others can benefit from this thesis as well. Obviously, not all youth ministers will speak at a weeklong camp, but most presenters will still need to prepare evangelistic messages. They will also need to prepare a message sequence that will cover different lengths of time: an event, a semester, a weekend retreat etc. The messages and their order in this project can serve as an example of how to prepare both an evangelistic message and an evangelistic message sequence.

This project will also include sections on the theology of proclamation, the philosophy of incarnational ministry and the state of today's youth culture. Theological issues and obstacles found in the proposed message sequence framework will also be addressed.

The outline of this project will include:

- Chapter 2
  - The theology of proclamation
  - The philosophy of incarnational ministry
- Chapter 3
  - A case for reaching adolescents

- The state of today's youth culture
- A discussion over Young Life's basic message sequence
- Chapter 4
  - Creating an evangelistic message sequence
  - Message outlines
  - Assessment of each message
- Chapter 5
  - Project summary and conclusions
- Appendices
  - *Signs* manuscript
  - Words for *Don't let me get Me*
  - Words for *Love Song*
  - Message worksheet
  - Topics and scriptures
  - Sin – power point presentation
  - Small group discussion questions
  - New Christian Walk seminar
  - Study on message preparation
  - Manuscript for the *Prodigal Daughter*
  - Message manuscripts

The primary intent of this project is to provide a guide for Young Life interns during their time of training. However, a second intent is that it will be used as a guide for youth ministers outside of Young Life who

are responsible for communicating the Gospel to disinterested, un-churched adolescents.

### **Disclaimer**

Although this is an academic work, it is written in a style and language designed to penetrate a contemporary, youth-oriented audience.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this project, it is important to redefine the following terms. Rather than referring to the presenter as the preacher the word speaker will be used. In place of the word sermon the words message or talk will be used. This is the common vernacular of the audience for which this project is intended.

- CHAPTER TWO -

A THEOLOGY OF PROCLAMATION AND INCARNATIONAL MINISTRY

**Preface:**

This chapter states the biblical and theological importance of proclaiming the Gospel to the adolescent culture. It also includes a theological case for incarnational ministry. Typically, young youth ministers and volunteers have very little training in the area of homiletics, especially when it comes to speaking to teenagers. The vast majority of youth ministers and volunteer leaders do not have a theological framework for proclamation or a biblical framework for a model of incarnational ministry.

**Introduction**

There is a tendency when speaking to adolescents to overlook the need for sound theology. This is especially true from an evangelistic perspective. At times the speaker becomes the entertainer rather than the messenger of good news. We tell funny stories, we strain to make the scripture fit our favorite introduction, and we fill our time with entertaining movie clips that don't seem to say what we need them to say! We labor to keep their attention for twenty or thirty minutes as we dazzle them with our performance. Though this is not acceptable, the pressure to do so understandable.

In an age of media and technology it is challenging to capture the attention of a teenager. Competing with Hollywood and MTV can seem to be a losing battle. So we become entertainers and event managers. We decide to fight fire with fire and beat the world at its own game. We rely on a program-driven ministry that will attract adolescents with all its glitz and glitter. However, when it comes to proclaiming the Gospel to disinterested, un-churched kids, there is a better way. More significantly, it is God's way. Through the art of combining good theology and quality speaking skills with the style of incarnational evangelism, youth ministers, leaders and workers can compete with what the secular world has to offer.

### **Theology of Proclamation**

Preach the Word! The Apostle Paul charges his young friend and protégé, Timothy, with this mandate. Paul was extremely clear that Timothy was to let nothing stand in his way. He was to endure hardship, suffer persecution, work as an evangelist and perform the duties of his ministry. Preaching was among those duties and Paul was sure to exhort Timothy in this privileged role:

1In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and of his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. *II Timothy 4:1, 2 (NIV)*

It would have been difficult for Paul to make this first verse any more significant. He did not merely focus on the present age, but he

directed Timothy to look to the coming age when Jesus will judge the living and the dead.<sup>8</sup> He puts a lot of significance behind the word “charge” before he ever mentions it.

Young Timothy would certainly feel the weight of this charge. There was no escaping Paul’s message. This is the same burden modern preachers need to feel. There can be no greater privilege or responsibility than delivering the word of God.

In verse two Paul delivers the charge. Preach the Word! Paul is also clear on the timing, in season and out of season. Whether the time seemed ripe or not, Timothy was to stick by his duty.<sup>9</sup> Convenience is of no matter when it comes to preaching the Gospel. This rings just as true for our modern age. The human mind can imagine a multitude of reasons why not to preach the Word, but no matter the season, we must be prepared!

Though Paul was writing to Timothy at the time, this mandate does not apply to Timothy alone. Indeed, this is an edict for anyone called to lead or teach. Paul goes on to write about the future and the day when men will no longer tolerate sound doctrine. Instead, they will turn away from the truth and will embrace myth, lies and legends. No doubt, that day has come. We live in a world that denies truth and turns to relativism, warped philosophy and alternate world religions. Regarding

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<sup>8</sup> John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, New Testament edition. ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1983), 757.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 758.



truth, George Barna, has identified some very revealing statistics about today's youth culture:

- 81% of adolescents polled agreed with the following statement – No one can be absolutely positive that he or she knows the truth.
- 70% of adolescents polled agreed with the following statement – There is no such thing as “absolute truth”; two people could define “truth” in conflicting ways and both could still be correct.<sup>10</sup>

Barna goes on to state that “Without a doubt, teen America’s confusion regarding truth is a reflection of distorted and contradictory teaching and modeling they receive from adults.”<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, the need for a “Timothy” and a “Paul” in this age is greater than ever. Paul’s edict, “Preach the Word!” applies almost 2000 years later just as it did in ancient Ephesus!

Paul’s mandate on preaching is not limited to the book of II Timothy. His passion and conviction rings clear in his epistle to the Romans. He writes:

It’s exactly the same no matter what a person’s religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. “Everyone who calls, ‘Help, God!’ gets help.”

But how can people call for help if they don’t know whom to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? That’s why Scripture exclaims,

A sight to take your breath away!

Grand processions of people telling all the good things of God!

But not everybody is ready for this, ready to see and hear and act. Isaiah asked what we all ask at one time or another: “Does

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<sup>10</sup> George Barna, *Real Teens* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 2001), 93.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

anyone care, God? Is anyone listening and believing a word of it?" The point is, before you trust, you have to listen. But unless Christ's Word is preached, there's nothing to listen to. *Romans 10:12-17 (The Message)*

How can they hear if nobody tells them? Paul's passion is evident in his words. Paul himself was sent out to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3). When he was sent out, he was not sent under his own authority, he was sent under God's authority. The connotation of the word "sent" is that one is sent with the authority of another. Hence, the message does not originate with the messenger. It originates with the sending authority.<sup>12</sup> This is what gives power to the Gospel message. In the case of one who preaches the Word, that sending authority is God. Because this power changes lives, Paul understood the need for others to hear the message and exhorts the Roman Christians to preach the Gospel.

With this text in mind, there can be no mistake that the same is true today. Someone must be sent to the unbelievers of the world to tell them the truth. As the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to identify, raise up, and train those called by God to preach and send them to a wanting world.

The word "preach" conjures up negative connotations for the average person. Though this is true even for Christians, it is exponentially so for the unbeliever. Kent Anderson brings this truth into

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger, *Zondervan Niv Bible Commentary*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 452.

focus in his web based article *Preaching: Communicating Truth in a Contrary Culture*:

Is there anything more offensive in today's world than preaching? If there is, it would be hard to imagine what it could be. Preaching is the one thing the world still sees as sin. It is the single last thing we are allowed to slam. Take, for example, this forcefully worded web posting,

"Everybody has the right to believe what they believe. NOBODY has the right to push their beliefs on their fellow beings. To preach at someone who does not wish to be preached at is RAPE. Not rape of the body, but rape of the mind and soul. There is no excuse for it."

Of course, most people are too polite to put it in these words. Still, one gets the idea that preaching is not the esteemed profession it once was. Preaching, many would say, is a smokestack industry. The preacher is right up there with the typewriter salesman. Well meaning, perhaps, but irrelevant, or worse.<sup>13</sup>

Sadly, the thought of preaching brings to mind images of condemning street evangelists, manipulative TV evangelists and different flavors of fire and brimstone delivered by a fist waving, pulpit pounding, fever-pitched preacher-man. Over the years I have taught seminars on Proclamation and Preaching to many young adults. I often begin by asking what thought first comes to mind when they hear the word "preach". Invariably, students will exclaim a negative word or thought.

Yet, we know that God has given us the mandate to preach because it is a strategic tool used to advance his Kingdom. So why has something so good been perceived as so bad? With the help of a few bad preachers, people have developed a misguided and inaccurate concept of preaching.

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<sup>13</sup> Kent Anderson, "Preaching: Communicating Truth in a Contrary Culture," (2005).

In his book, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, John Piper brings some sparkle to the name of “preaching”. Using the text in Romans 10:14,15, he defines preaching as “the heralding of good news from a messenger sent by God.”<sup>14</sup> Piper expresses the purpose and role of the preacher as he quotes Cotton Mather, a New England minister from 300 years ago. Mather said, “The great design and intention of the Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men.”<sup>15</sup>

Piper asked a key question: What message does the preacher herald? What is the good news?<sup>16</sup> He boils his answer down to one simple, yet powerful statement: “Your God reigns!”<sup>17</sup> Piper would say that this is the message of every preacher, past and present. This is the good news. The creator of the universe is still in charge. He has not abandoned ship. He has not turned his back on humanity. Rather, we have turned our backs on him. But the good news is a great King and creator who forgives and reconciles with those who accept his free gift of compassion borne out through his Son.

If the preacher is in fact the messenger, it is safe and fitting to call him a herald, one who speaks in place of the King. In medieval times the herald bore a burden of great responsibility. He literally spoke in the

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<sup>14</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1990), 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>16</sup> The “Good News” or the “Gospel” can be broken down into several topics that should be included in a basic evangelistic message sequence. This will be addressed in Chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> Piper, 23.

place of the king. He did not give his own opinion or his own answers; he spoke the message of the king. The herald did not create the message; he only delivered it. He had to be trusted by the king himself to represent him and deliver the message in such a way to be understood and accepted. The office of herald was one of great responsibility and great honor.

So it is with the preacher. He, too, is a herald. He is greatly honored and privileged to speak in the place of the king. But with this honor comes the great responsibility to deliver the good news. He must accurately interpret and clearly communicate the Holy Scriptures to mankind. The herald is God's instrument in restoring his throne and dominion in the souls' of men! Suddenly, with this image in mind, a new and positive light is shed on the concept of preaching.

So far, it is established that:

1. Preaching is a mandate from God.
2. Someone must be sent to the unbeliever.
3. The preacher is literally a herald, speaking in place of the King.

There is one final matter that must be addressed. The herald does not go alone. The preacher is not left to his own feeble resources. He can take courage and know that the Holy Spirit gives him power. There is no need to despair or fear the task of heralding. We discover this power in Acts 1:8:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. *Acts 1:8 (NIV)*

This text is powerful for anyone who heralds the message of God.

Acts 1:8 dictates that the apostles would be supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit. This power would enable them to be Christ's witnesses. This power was experienced at Pentecost (Acts 2) when all the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and after Peter's message approximately 3000 were added to their number that day! This same Holy Spirit is meant for all who trust their lives to Christ. It was not reserved only for the apostles.<sup>18</sup> The Holy Spirit is for every Christian.

Therefore, knowing the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, the messenger can move with confidence. The Holy Spirit literally dwells in his being and accompanies him wherever he goes. He can preach with faith in something other than himself. But even with this power, the preacher must always keep in mind that his role is merely one of a herald. The herald has no say in who will hear the message and who will not. This is not his calling. This is the Lord's domain. The Holy Spirit is sent with the mission of wooing the hearts of men. This phenomenon is well noted in First Thessalonians 1:4, 5:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our Gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.  
*1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5 (NIV)*

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<sup>18</sup> For examples of others experiencing the Holy Spirit look to Acts 4:31 and Acts 8:15-17.

Hence, it is by no strength or gift of humanity that any person would ever trust in Christ. It is only through the power of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes lives when people trust in Christ. The messenger is absolutely and solely dependent on the Holy Spirit to convince people of their need for salvation. It is God who changes people's hearts, not the messenger's witty persuasion or clever words. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, our words are empty and fruitless.<sup>19</sup>

The role of the herald is simple, "...preach the word, in season and out of season, preach the word!" The King will take care of the rest.

### **Penetrating the Culture of Adolescents: A Philosophy of Incarnational Ministry**

A goal of this project is to provide a training tool for young youth ministers, young life staff and volunteer leaders who are interested in becoming excellent speakers to un-churched, disinterested adolescents. The core of this project will focus on seven messages that make up an evangelistic message sequence aimed at lost teenagers. However, it is critical for the speaker to understand the importance and the power of knowing the audience. This section, *Penetrating the Culture of Adolescents*, is designed to help speakers understand and appreciate the model of incarnational ministry, because an incarnational approach is imperative when speaking to teenagers. A speaker will spend a scant few minutes in front of an audience of disinterested, un-churched and un-

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<sup>19</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, *Life Application Study Bible: New International Version* (Wheaton, IL: Zondervan, 1997), 2171.

reached kids during a week of normal ministry or a day of camp. The impact of those few minutes is largely dependent on what transpired before the speaker ever stepped onto the stage. Did the speaker spend time with the audience before speaking? Did he or she get to know them and begin to understand them? The message is always better received by friends than strangers.

In the world of Young Life we call this *winning the right to be heard*. This is the maxim of incarnational ministry. The very essence of incarnational ministry, or relational ministry as it is often called, is the fine social art of developing relationships within the context of a particular audience or culture. Within the scope of this project that particular audience or culture is the world of adolescents. From an evangelistic perspective these relationships are formed with the hope of reaching the un-reached with the message of Christ. More specifically, the evangelistic incarnational minister seeks to develop close, positive relationships with the intentional purpose of introducing the unbeliever to Christ. The ultimate hope is to take part in God's great commission<sup>20</sup> and witness a changed life newly committed to Christ. According to the paradigm of incarnational ministry, the right and privilege to introduce the creator of the universe to an unbelieving friend is only won or earned after a level of intimacy is achieved.

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.



Incarnational ministry by its very nature is difficult, time consuming and emotionally draining. Incarnational ministry requires the minister to enter the world of the lost and walk alongside them. Its success depends on the rubbing of one life on another. Just like Jesus did when he entered our world, the incarnational minister will become knee deep in the muck and mire of modern aged sinners. It's unavoidable. It's inescapable. Otherwise, it's just not incarnational.

### **A Biblical Case for Incarnational Ministry**

If incarnational ministry is so tough, why bother with it? First and foremost, it's biblical. At the heart of the four Gospels we discover the incarnation. Immanuel. God with us! The creator of Heaven and earth invaded humanity in the form of a helpless baby. Jesus was born.

A closer examination of several biblical texts crystallizes a strong case for incarnational ministry. Three major movements are identified in the biblical incarnational process.

#### **1. God became flesh and bone.**

The very word *incarnate* means to become flesh and that's exactly what God the Son did. He became flesh and bone. Philippians 2:5-8 depicts the immensity of God's decision to enter our world:

<sup>5</sup> Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. <sup>6</sup> He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. <sup>7</sup> Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! <sup>8</sup> Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and

the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion. *Philippians 2:5-8 (The Message)*

Paul writes these words in his letter of exhortation to the church of Philippi. These particular verses poetically describe Jesus' move from Heaven to earth. They take us to eternity past<sup>21</sup> where the pre-existent Jesus coexisted with God the Father and God the Spirit within the communion of the Holy Trinity. Verses six and seven bring into full focus both Christ's deity and his humility. Not only was Jesus God, he shared absolute equality with God.<sup>22</sup> Even though Jesus held all the rights and privileges of Heaven, and even though he reigned over the universe along side the Father and the Holy Spirit<sup>23</sup> he did not see his equality with God as something that should be selfishly maintained. Before himself, Jesus thought of mankind first.<sup>24</sup> He set aside his rights and privileges as God and became human. He humbled himself and became a servant!

Though Jesus' humanity was genuine in every sense of the word, he was unique among all mankind in that he was blameless and without sin.<sup>25</sup> Jesus was also unique in that while he was completely human, he was also completely divine. He did not in any way discard his deity. God cannot cease to be God.<sup>26</sup> Hence, Jesus was in every sense God in the flesh.

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<sup>21</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2 vols. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1989), 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Philippians 2:6*.

<sup>23</sup> Wiersbe.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> Walvoord, Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, 654.

<sup>26</sup> Barker and Kohlenberger, 797.

Though Paul wrote a beautiful Christology, ultimately this text was composed to illustrate the point of selflessness and humility.<sup>27</sup> This premise is stated in verse five. The letter to the Philippians sends the message of Paul's love for the church of Philippi, yet he gives them this great exhortation: Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.<sup>28</sup> That attitude is one of selflessness and humility and it rings the truest as Paul depicts Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross. This is the attitude that Paul challenges the church of Philippi to maintain and it is the attitude that should be expected of Christians today.

Philippians 2:5-8 is a primary passage in substantiating two critical points. First, Paul substantiates the incarnation of God. Second, Paul challenges Christians to live out that incarnation as we share in the attitude of Christ.

John 1:14 is an important text concerning the incarnation. Both the NIV and the Message bring life to God's entry into humanity:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. *John 1:14 (NIV)*

The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish. *John 1:14 (The Message)*

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us! The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood! This is

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Philippians 2:5.

the incarnation and it is our model as Christ followers. John 1:1 states that the Word is indeed God and we see this God, the creator of all things, step down from his kingdom to strand himself in flesh and blood. At that moment heaven and earth collided and a climatic, cosmic miracle occurred! Jesus, the one and only Son of God was born to a virgin. He made his residence among human beings.<sup>29</sup> He allowed himself to become a baby and experience all things human: hunger, pain, exhaustion, thirst, temptation and even death.

Why? Why would God do such a thing? This was his greatest possible expression of compassion. Through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God the Father was fully revealed to mankind.<sup>30</sup> God was truly speaking their language! He knew and understood their pain and eventually was crucified for the sin of the world. This is our template for incarnational ministry. Eugene Peterson's, *The Message*, says it in the most earthy tone, "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." That is exactly what we are supposed to do! We are to be the flesh and blood of Jesus and enter the world of adolescents and set up shop. We are to reveal the Father to teenagers day to day with our lives, vulnerable and transparent. This is exactly what Jesus did. He walked among us.

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<sup>29</sup> Barker and Kohlenberger, 273.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

## 2. God walked among us.

According to the popular trends of western culture today, no one has a corner market on truth. There seems to be more paths to the top of the mountain than ever before. However, as Christians we can be sure that there is only one truth and one way to the Kingdom of God. As infant turned to man, Jesus, fully divine, he walked among us. He denounced the Pharisaic and Sadducean rigid form of religion and wooed men and women into a relationship with himself, the Messiah. Jesus confirmed with his words and portrayed with his life the absolute truth of God's Kingdom. He shared this "truth" in John's Gospel:

<sup>1</sup> Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. <sup>2</sup> There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live. <sup>4</sup> And you already know the road I'm taking."

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said, "Master, we have no idea where you're going. How do you expect us to know the road?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said, "I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. <sup>7</sup> If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You've even seen him! *John 14:1-7 (The Message)*

In verses one through three Jesus communicates a far greater hope than it seems his disciples were able to soak in at the moment. He speaks matter-of-factly of his father's home that we will share with him in eternity. God's absolute truth is no dead end street. Instead, it is eternal.

Verse five makes it apparent that Thomas wants to come with Jesus, but he wants to know which road to take. At that point, in verse

six, Jesus makes an epic statement, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.” (NIV) Jesus does not leave his position on “truth” up for debate. At that very moment he derailed any hope of any other path to God and his Kingdom. As God in the flesh walked among his own creation, he used that time to reveal his character, his compassion and his absolute truth to those he would eventually send out into the world. In verse seven, Jesus verbally claims his divine nature. The invisible God literally made himself visible.<sup>31</sup> Because Jesus was the incarnate God, he did not just teach the way to heaven or show the way to Heaven, he is the way to Heaven!<sup>32</sup>

As God walked among us, he made his reality known. This was no apparition, spirit or ghost. God genuinely made himself known as a human to humanity. This is the historical Jesus.

So often seeing is believing, yet the most desired gifts of life, purpose, meaning, love, compassion, grace, hope, can't be seen or touched. But we still long for these gifts as a newborn longs for his mother. God understood this longing that is woven into the fabric of the depraved human heart, so he made himself seen and known. As a result, no one could rightly ask why God would not reveal himself. Jesus' disciples spread the word that God had been seen and touched and embraced on planet earth! The apostle John shares this testimony in First John 1:1-4:

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<sup>31</sup> Colossians 1:15.

<sup>32</sup> Wiersbe, 352.

<sup>1</sup> From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. <sup>2</sup> The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we’re telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us.

<sup>3</sup> We saw it, we heard it, and now we’re telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy! *1<sup>st</sup> John: 1-4 (The Message)*

John was moving toward the end of his life when he wrote this epistle to all believers.<sup>33</sup> As an eyewitness and as a disciple of Christ, John wrote with great zeal and great authority. Glenn Barker describes these first few verses as John’s “language of ecstasy.”<sup>34</sup> At the time, John’s audience was one or two generations removed from the lifetime of Christ. Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 AD and Christians had been scattered around the known world. This was a time of spiritual decline and weakening commitments among believers.<sup>35</sup> John took this opportunity to share his personal experience as a witness to the Messiah with an audience that needed to hear his story.

The raw passion and zeal the Apostle John oozes for the flesh and blood God named Jesus in verses one and two screams out to the reader. His exuberance is contagious as he urges mankind to know that the God of the universe had revealed himself and had walked among them. His

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<sup>33</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, 2273.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Ely Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible: Hebrews - Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1981), 306.

<sup>35</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, 2274.

message is loud and clear: I saw him, I touched him, I spoke with him and I walked with him, the incarnate God. John desperately desired for all to know that Jesus was and is God. Without a doubt, John experienced a “real” relationship with Jesus. He knew him and trusted him with his life.

Knowing Christ was not enough for John. He longed for others to know Jesus as well. In verses three and four we hear John’s commitment to herald the news of Jesus Christ! John’s motive is simple, he wants others to join in the fellowship and communion with Jesus and experience the same joy he has experienced. John was a true forefather of incarnational ministry. He knew that his personal relationship with Jesus was not his sole mission. He was also called, better yet, compelled to proclaim Christ.

As Jesus walked among man, woman and child, his humanity was unmistakable. But so was his divinity. Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be; he was God. He proved it with a sinless life, heavenly miracles and his unwavering compassion for the broken and down trodden. God revealed himself to mankind. The Apostle Peter sums it up well, “.... we were eyewitnesses of his majesty!”<sup>36</sup>

### 3. God within us

In the first two movements of the incarnation, God became flesh in the form of the infant Jesus and he later reveals himself to mankind as

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<sup>36</sup> 2 Peter 1:16.



he walked among his created. In the final movement, God's incarnation manifests itself within man rather than among man. God the Holy Spirit resides in all those who trust Christ as Savior and charges us with the task of becoming Jesus with skin on. God commissions his followers to become his ambassadors:

<sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority that is in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. *Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)*

When Jesus addressed his disciples in verse eighteen, he once again identified himself with God and as God. He claimed the authority of both Heaven and earth. In fact, he enjoys universal authority. All God's authority is mediated through him.<sup>37</sup> There is absolutely nothing above his reign. He is in charge. For the disciples this is a moment of absolute honor and privilege. In verse nineteen Jesus uses his authority to commission his disciples and command them to "make disciples of all the nations". The King of kings, in essence, knighted them and unleashed them into a world taken hostage by sin and Satan. Just as the Apostles were commissioned by Christ, all who trust Jesus as Messiah are commissioned by him as his ambassadors and are given the same command to "make disciples".

With this commission and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) Christ's followers take their honored role in the incarnation. As

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<sup>37</sup> Barker and Kohlenberger, 133.

believers, we represent the Kingdom of Heaven and we become the face of Jesus. This is the catalyst for an incarnational method of ministry. God the Spirit resides in the hearts of believers and empowers us to walk among the un-churched and disinterested and herald the Good News of Christ. We are sent by God and with God to “...make disciples of all the nations”.

The Apostle Paul depicts a wonderful model of incarnational ministry with his own life in Thessalonica. Paul knew what it meant to give his life away:

6We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you. 7But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. 8We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. *1 Thessalonians 2: 6-8 (NIV)*

Paul clearly lived out the incarnation. He was the face of Jesus to the people in Thessalonica. In verse six Paul communicates his right to have received special privileges while among the Thessalonians, but he states that he did not seek to flatter them or receive their praise. Paul sought only the approval of God, not the approval of the people.<sup>38</sup> Rather than seeking their approval, Paul, Silas and Timothy sought to care for them just as a mother would care for her baby. This communicates Paul’s compassion and his willingness to sacrifice as a mother would sacrifice for a child.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Verse eight breathes life into the idea of incarnational ministry. Paul was not only interested in sharing “the Gospel of God” with the Thessalonians; he was even more interested in sharing his life with them. This is the style of ministry that gives Jesus a real “face” for the unbeliever to see and touch. Through his relational style Paul became Jesus with skin on for the Thessalonians. His love for them seems unconditional. His compassion for them did not fade or depart depending on their response to the Gospel. Paul’s experience in Thessalonica is a model for modern day incarnational ministers.

### **Incarnational Ministry: A Model for Modern Times**

Jesus commands his followers, the body of Christ, to give their lives away. Dean Borgman states this as a daunting task:

Toward the end of his ministry Jesus gave his followers a stunning mandate. If it was not one of his most daunting challenges to them, it should be for us: *As the Father has sent me, so I send you (into the cultures of the world) John 20:21 (NRSV).*<sup>39</sup>

Jesus does not command us to build more buildings or to sit behind our desks and computer screens. Just as the Father sent him into the world, Jesus sends us into the world!<sup>40</sup>

Hence, we are to represent Jesus and enter the world of the lost and broken. We get this idea from God himself who did not stay in Heaven and simply hope that mankind would one day come to him and

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<sup>39</sup> Dean Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough : A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 31.

<sup>40</sup> More Biblical references for the incarnation: John 20:21, Hebrew 2:14, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1:15-19, Isaiah 53, Romans 1:2-5, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Timothy 3:16, Colossians 2:9.

know him. No, he came to us! He became flesh and bone and walked among us.<sup>41</sup> He did not wait at the temples and synagogues for the folks to drop by for a visit. Instead, he went to the people. He walked their streets and rubbed shoulders with them and he shared meals with them. He entered their homes and consequently, he entered their lives. This is our path. Just as God entered our world in the form of Jesus, we must follow suit.

Incarantional ministry is biblical, from a practical and modern perspective, and it is effective. It worked 2000 years ago when Jesus spoke to the woman at the well and it works today. People are still people, made in the image of God and designed for relationship. What is cross-cultural and what is not may be debatable, but the human heart and its inherent needs, to love and be loved, crosses all cultures and all boundaries. Every man and every woman is created to be in a relationship with God and with others. Hence, the paradigm of relational ministry is one with inherent advantages, despite its difficulties.

There is no culture better suited for this ministry form than the culture of adolescents. Teenagers are typically skeptical and distrusting of adults. Often teenagers feel marginalized and separated, if not segregated, from the rest of society. Though most kids do not know how to verbalize it, they feel abandoned by society and its failing systems.<sup>42</sup> In

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<sup>41</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>42</sup> Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 38.

the defense of young people, it is not unusual to place the blame on “those kids” and use them as scapegoats. Because of their lower hierarchical status in our society and the normal immaturity of many adolescents, teenagers tend to be easy targets for suspicion. Living in this kind of world makes it easy to understand why kids need a helping hand. Though they may not seem like it on the surface, teenagers deeply desire healthy, wholesome relationships with caring adults.<sup>43</sup>

The burdens of a broken world continue to take its toll on today’s youth culture. The facts demand our attention:

- The rate of suicide for ages 16-18 tripled in the last twenty years.
- 1 in 7 teenage girls will become pregnant by age 19.
- 8.5% of adolescents attempted suicide last year
- There are over 10 million teenage alcoholics in America.
- Over 50% of all high school students will be sexually active before graduation.<sup>44</sup>

In a world where teenagers feel lost and abandoned, transforming relationships with interested, committed adults is the key to introducing Jesus to the young people of our world. Pete Ward, the director of Oxford

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Josh McDowell, *Josh's Notes* (2005, accessed); available from <http://www.josh.org/notes>.

Youth Works, states it clearly and succinctly, “Relationships are the fuel on which youth work travels.”<sup>45</sup>

In the world of youth ministry, winning the right to be heard is the soul of relational ministry. A stranger will never have the influence over a teenager that a “friend” will have. Even if the stranger is of great notoriety, the lesser-known adult who has logged hours of tears and laughter will carry the most clout. This concept is equally true in the realm of speaking. When a speaker has entered the world of kids and given his or her life away to know them and know them well, he or she will win the right to be heard. No other method can set up the messenger of Christ more effectively than the deliberate and intentional act of incarnational ministry. Dean Borgman sums it up well:

To be heard, the Word must come into the world of young people. Presence precedes preaching, and listening precedes speaking. A hundred preachers will fail to break through to those kids over there on the corner. But the street worker who has hung out with them for months may be able to penetrate to the heart of their concerns and gain an audience.<sup>46</sup>

When relational youth ministers have entered the world of teenagers and logged hours out of their own comfort zones, kids will listen. Relational ministry provides a platform for proclamation that no other ministry paradigm will. The power of this method is found in the

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<sup>45</sup> Pete Ward and Dean Borgman, *God at the Mall: Youth Ministry That Meets Kids Where They're At* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 52.

<sup>46</sup> Borgman, D. *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 19.

bond and trust forged in friendship. We embrace this style of ministry with the understanding that its imminent outcome will be changed lives.

The connection between relational ministry and speaking is undeniable and will deepen the impact of youth ministers who understand this concept.<sup>47</sup> When we've won the right to be heard, there is an open invitation to speak into the lives of teenagers who would have otherwise turned a deaf ear to the life-changing message of Jesus.

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<sup>47</sup> Speaking at a camp or a retreat is obviously different than speaking on a weekly basis to the same audience. However, the principles of relational ministry can still be employed. Camp speakers often see themselves as just that, camp speakers and nothing more. Rather than hiding away for the vast majority of the day, the speaker should be out and about with kids. A lot of relational opportunities will come up through the course of a full day at camp or a retreat. A speaker needs to be available to hear kids' stories and answer burning questions. The speaker should look for possible shared experiences and be extremely visible. Even at camp, the speaker must win the right to be heard. Unfortunately, this is rare among most camp speakers.

- CHAPTER THREE -

LITERATURE REVIEW: UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATING WITH  
TODAY'S ADOLESCENT CULTURE

**Introduction**

Today's adolescent culture is an enigma at best. It is difficult to understand and even more difficult to penetrate. They live in a paradoxical world where young people are stuck between childhood and adulthood; neither boy nor man; neither girl nor woman. On the inside they scream for mature relationships with adults, but on the outside they are often cold and resistant. Contradiction is their normative behavior as a culture, whereas logic for adolescents is anything but normative. Earl Wilson, in his work, *You Try Being a Teenager*, calls teenagers "adults waiting to happen".<sup>48</sup> This seems appropriate for the adolescents of our world. Just as butterflies struggle and fight their way out of the cocoon, kids today must struggle and fight their way out of adolescence.

The struggle to escape the cocoon is long, arduous and often lonely. Many adults seem blind to the perils that threaten teenagers today and those who do want to help often struggle with how to do so.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer two questions:

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<sup>48</sup> Earl D. Wilson, *You Try Being a Teenager* (Portland Multnomah Press, 1982), 21-2.



1. Why should we attempt to penetrate adolescent culture with the Gospel?
2. What is the state of today's adolescent culture?

I will also address Young Life's traditional message sequence through the eyes of several Young Life staff and professors who are former Young Life staff. As a part of this study, I did a written interview with these colleagues to gain a deeper insight on the effectiveness of Young Life's message sequence.

### **Targeting Adolescents: A Case for Speaking Evangelistically to Teenagers**

An examination of the literature on adolescent culture shows that there is an overwhelming case for reaching out to teenagers. This research provides several compelling reasons to speak evangelistically to adolescents.

#### Teenagers are spiritually receptive.

Today's generation of kids has proven to have a much higher propensity for spiritual matters. According to George Barna, "Most teens are highly interested in spirituality, but comparatively few are engaged in the pursuit of spiritual depth."<sup>49</sup> This communicates the receptivity of teenagers, but also implies that kids may not have opportunities to engage.

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<sup>49</sup> Barna, 61.

Evidence of adolescent receptivity is found in an article published by the Barna Group. They discovered that 77% of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before they are 21 years old and 64% do so before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>50</sup> This data clearly supports the case for reaching out to adolescents. As a population, the probability for impact may be higher than any other people group.

*Soul Searching: the Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, state the case for adolescent receptivity with their recent research, "What do U.S. teenagers actually believe religiously? More than 80% do believe in God, slightly more than 10% are unsure about their belief in God. Only 3% definitely don't believe in God."<sup>51</sup> They say that kids may not all see God as the Judeo Christian God, but nonetheless, they acknowledge a higher being and prove themselves spiritually receptive. According to Smith and Denton, the vast majority of U.S. teenagers consider themselves theists and they believe in the concept of divine judgment.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, it appears that today's teens are receptive to spiritual matters.

#### Adolescents are willing to take risks.

An area of major criticism for teenagers, their risky behavior, is also a reason adolescents should be a target audience evangelistically.

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<sup>50</sup> The Barna Group, "Evangelism Is Most Effective among Kids," in *The Barna Update* (2004).

<sup>51</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Because teens are willing to engage in taking risks, it is quite possible that an individual will “take a risk” on Christianity. In his book *Real Teens*, George Barna explains it this way:

Of all the different age-defined populations, high school and college students feel most capable of taking audacious risks in virtually every dimension of their lives. They rarely feel encumbered by the tyranny of personal history and remain unconscious of social limitations. Once people accept massive doses of responsibility—such as jobs, housing payments, car ownership, marriage, parenting, community service, health-care—the stability, consistency and weight of daily personal choices lessens their adventurousness and freedom to experiment.<sup>53</sup>

Kids will make choices. There is no way around it. As adult members of Christ’s body, we must understand that we have an opportunity to help young people make good decisions. So what happens to a young man or woman who chooses the wrong path? Do they grow out of this pattern? Do they commonly experience a character change to turn their lives around? Barna makes an interesting observation:

. . . once people hit their mid-20s and beyond, they are who they are, and the degree of personal change they undergo in terms of character and values is minimal.<sup>54</sup>

Today’s teenagers are tomorrow’s adults. Our best opportunity to effect change of character and change of values and change of heart is when a person is young.

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<sup>53</sup> Barna, 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Adolescents are the largest un-reached people group.

Demographically speaking, the adolescent population is a dominant force to be reckoned with. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002, there are 41.5 million pre-teens and teens (ages 10-19) living in the United States. This is within a general population of 295 million.<sup>55</sup> Worldwide, there are 2.2 billion children.<sup>56</sup>

A population this significant warrants our attention and our commitment. There should be no avoiding it. Yet young people often seem invisible or hidden to adult society. How can this be, when they surround us? Dean Borgman suggests that young people, as the world's largest un-reached population, should be the first "foreign" mission of the church.<sup>57</sup>

Religiously minded adolescents are better off.

Teens who are bent towards Christian values and ideologies are better off than teens who are not. This appears to be true even for kids who are marginal in their belief and commitment. Smith and Denton have observed this finding:

In general, for whatever reasons and whatever the causal directions, more highly religiously active teenagers are doing significantly better in life on a variety of important outcomes than are less religiously active teens.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Center For Youth Studies, *Hotstat* (Center for Youth Studies, 2002, accessed); available from <http://www.centerforyouth.org>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. (accessed).

<sup>57</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Smith and Denton, 28.

*Soul Searching*, by Smith and Denton, is the reported findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion. This is the largest and most detailed study of adolescents and religion ever done. After doing a nation wide phone survey of teens and parents and doing more than 250 face-to-face interviews, it was concluded that religion does play a major role in the lives of American teenagers.<sup>59</sup>

During their study, Smith and Denton categorized teenagers by their religious ideal types. They were classified as: Devoted, Regulars, Sporadics and Disengaged.<sup>60</sup> The devoted being the most committed to religious ideals and the disengaged the least committed. The research uncovered several indicators that religiously minded teens are better off than non-religiously minded teens when it comes to risky behaviors:

- 1% of devoted teens are likely to smoke cigarettes on a daily basis; compared with 14% of disengaged teens.
- Less than 1% of devoted teens are likely to drink alcohol on a weekly basis; compared to 11% of disengaged teens.
- Less than 1% of devoted teens regularly smokes marijuana; compared to 8% of disengaged teens.
- 3% of devoted teens report school grades of Cs, Ds and Fs; compared to 14% of disengaged teens.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 222.

- 3% of devoted teen's parents report them as fairly or very rebellious; compared to 17% of disengaged teens.<sup>61</sup>

Similar findings were discovered concerning media consumption, sexual activity, emotional wellbeing, family relationships, morals and ethics, compassion and community service.<sup>62</sup> With these findings, it seems overwhelmingly true that adolescents who are religiously minded fair far better than those who are not.

The need to reach adolescents is overwhelming.

Kids live in a dangerous world today and there is little they can do about it. In his book, *When Kumbaya is not Enough*, Dean Borgman formulates a practical theology for youth ministry. Borgman is obviously impacted by the need of young people. He writes:

The challenge of youth ministry involves the suffering of children. The question will continue to be raised: Where is God when a child cries out while being sexually abused? According to the United Nations, two million children have died in war over the last ten years. Many more have suffered crippling injuries. An estimated one hundred million active land mines, some insidiously disguised as toys, make this world a dangerous place for children. No statistics can tell the extent of infant neglect and child abuse. Millions of children are being kept today as slaves, toiling in forced labor, or forced into prostitution. Worldwide, children and parents suffer from natural catastrophes, epidemics, terrorism and social upheavals. Their loss is the world's loss; those who survive will take possession and leadership of the world. God knows the loss and potential of childhood better than anyone.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 223.

<sup>63</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough : A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 3.

Everyday and every night, around the world young people suffer. It is our responsibility to reach out to the world's youth culture and speak into their lives the message of hope that only Jesus can give.

Chap Clark, in his book *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, took an intimate look at American youth culture by entering their world on a regular basis and studying their lives by developing personal relationships with adolescents. He spent time at the local high school and high school events. He substitute taught. He walked where kids walk. Through his observation, he discovered a society unto itself. He knows first hand the need teens face today:

When I was able to get close enough, to be trusted enough, to glimpse at life in this world, I did not hear a few voices crying out. I heard an overwhelming chorus of longing to be cared for and to be taken seriously. The collective adolescent society may appear impenetrable and may even be a powerful social force to be reckoned with, but beyond the perceived hostility that surrounds the mid-adolescent<sup>64</sup> is a fragile soul hidden behind a sophisticated layer of defense and protection. Even the most "solid" students confessed that life is far darker, far more violent, far more difficult, and far more tiring than adults, including their parents, realize.<sup>65</sup>

Through his study, Clark realized that most adults have little understanding about what teenagers are going through today. He found a developed social subculture that few adults are aware even exists and he heard an "overwhelming chorus" of need sung by the kids he got to know and observe.

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<sup>64</sup> Clark describes high school age students as mid-adolescents.

<sup>65</sup> Clark, 55.

Adolescents are extremely valuable.

Today's adolescents are our future. They are inherently vital to our ongoing civilization. But their value is exponentially greater than any anthropological worth. The value of adolescent culture is ultimately realized within a theological context. Ultimately, teenagers are valuable because they are valuable to God the Creator. Every one of them is made in his image. As Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life, said, "They are precious souls for whom the Lord died."<sup>66</sup>

Borgman addresses the value of young people:

The young and the impressionable are close to the heart of God. The poorest and most vulnerable among children are special targets of divine concern. Jesus made this point clear several times in his ministry (Mark 10:13-16). His amazingly strong statement about anyone who leads a child astray further illustrates and reinforces this truth (Mark 9:42). Jesus' selection of some relatively young people to be the leaders of his church points to his trust in youthful potential.<sup>67</sup>

Without a doubt, God deeply values the young. His thumbprint is pressed deep on their hearts. Though they may not look like it very often, they really are image bearers of our King. Deep beneath the many layers of attitude and style, there glows the spark of Christ. It may not be bright. It may seem hidden. But it is there. So, if adolescents are so valuable to God, shouldn't they be valuable to us?

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<sup>66</sup> Rayburn, 49.

<sup>67</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough : A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 2.



Adolescents will be influenced one way or another.

Needs always seek to be met. Pain will always seek to be soothed. So it is with adolescents. They need attention. They need support. They need compassion. In a word, they “need”. Unfortunately, adolescent needs are rarely met with the best candidates.

Whereas adults have a measure of political, social and/or economic power (even if it is only the power to vote), adolescents have none of this. The only measurable power they wield is the power of social status and position. Their plight is arguably out of their control and they “need” our help. If teens are living in a dangerous world, they deserve all the helping hands adult society can give them. Ultimately, if caring adults do not reach out and speak into the lives of kids, someone else will. Walt Mueller makes the same vivid point:

In recent years, adolescents have had fewer opportunities for interaction and communication with parents and other adults. One study showed that teens spent only 4.8 percent of their time with parents and 2 percent with adults who were not their parents. When push comes to shove, American dads and moms are devoting less time to brining up their sons and daughters, thereby allowing someone or something else to raise their children for them.<sup>68</sup>

It is not hyperbole to say that if young people do not have someone to turn to, they will keep turning until they find someone or something to meet their needs. Maybe it will be a good friend. Maybe it will be a romantic interest. Maybe it will be a gang member or a rock star. Marilyn

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<sup>68</sup> Walt Mueller, *Understanding Today's Youth Culture*, Rev. & expanded ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 8.

Manson, a very controversial rock star exclaims, “If you don’t raise your kids, I will!”<sup>69</sup>

### **Adolescent Culture: A View into the World of Teenagers**

Teenagers today live in a tumultuous world. The rate of suicide is on the rise. Drugs and alcohol continue to be a major threat. On-going violence forces kids to live in fear. Yet much of the adult population has abandoned the adolescent world and set them free to form their own separate culture.

Furthermore, teenagers are pounded everyday by the media with one message after another. They hear about the latest trends and fashions. They learn what’s in and what’s out. Information swarms their minds, delivered from multiple sources. Teenagers are receiving life guidance from the most impersonal, selfish and self-serving source—marketers.

Kids live in a virtual mine field and most often, there is no adult to lead them through. On their own, today’s adolescents face obstacles and decisions they are ill prepared to face. But there is no turning back. They must move forward. There’s nowhere else to go.

There are several trends that define the landscape of the adolescent world:

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted from a Marilyn Manson concert.

### Extended adolescence

Until early in the twentieth century, there was no such thing as adolescence. After the inception of the industrial age came the need to create a form of childcare while parents were at work. So the school system was born. Since then, the length of adolescence has stretched from 3-5 years to 10-20 years. Teenagers live in a sort of limbo stuck between childhood and adulthood. Smith and Lundquist bring this into sharp focus:

In American culture adolescence can begin at age 10, 11 or 12; at the latest official teenage status begins at 13. On the other end, many youth do not pass the symbolic cultural markers of full adulthood—school graduation, full-time work, financial independence, marriage—until the age of 18, 22, 25, or, for some, even their late 20's and early 30's.<sup>70</sup>

This was a dramatic change. Teenagers are now forced to endure an extended chapter in their lives that offers a very blurry and vague conclusion. With this kind of time span, there has to be an impact. Dean Borgman writes about this:

We are forcing children and adolescents to live in the limbo of pseudo-adulthood. True adulthood is more elusive than ever before. Since traditional rites of passage are being lost in this generational limbo, young people begin to create their own markers or rites of passage (including early and unprotected sex, wild drinking and driving, and other risky behaviors) that are not conducive to their growth and welfare.<sup>71</sup>

Extended adolescence keeps teens from growing into adulthood and taking responsibility for their own lives. It pushes young people to be

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<sup>70</sup> Smith and Denton, 184.

<sup>71</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough : A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 72.

financially dependent. It allows them to make poor choices and suffer less than the full consequence of their actions. Ultimately, extended adolescence creates a burden on society and does young people a terrible injustice.

### A chasm between adults and adolescents

Adolescents need and want adults in their lives. Though they may not look like it on the outside, kids truly long for adult relationships they can depend on and trust. Unfortunately the chasm between the two continues to grow wider and deeper with each passing year. The result of this existing chasm is devastating. Clark addresses this issue:

On the surface, the adolescent world appears to be relatively stable and healthy. Yet beneath the calm waters presented by positive empirical data there is turmoil that is difficult, painful, lonely, and even harmful to our young. Even among those who would argue that adolescents are basically fine, virtually no one would question the need young people, and especially adolescents, have for adults who are available, care, and come to them without a hidden or self-centered agenda. The fact is that adolescents need adults to become adults, and when adults are not present and involved in their lives, they are forced to figure out how to survive life on their own.<sup>72</sup>

Adults and the social structures and systems they created have abandoned today's teenagers. As Clark asserted, kids have been forced to fabricate their own culture and social structure. Kids, in every sense of the word are left to fend for themselves. A best friend will often play the role of mother or father. Surrogate families are found in gangs. Advice on life changing issues is sought out from the most inexperienced of tutors

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<sup>72</sup> Clark, 43.

and teens find themselves with few real answers to life's toughest questions.

If kids have truly been abandoned by adult society, the problems teens face are more to blame on adults than adolescents. Ultimately, today's adolescent culture is merely a sad reflection of today's adult culture. Adults often speak of the poor behavior and addictive and destructive nature of teenagers, but adults experience the same problems on an even greater scale. Adults experience divorce, alcoholism, suicide, drug addiction, abuse, depression and all the other problems the world has to offer. Many of the problems adults face are born out of a selfish and egocentric nature<sup>73</sup> and this exacerbates the tension felt between teens and adults. Murray Milner makes note of this situation in his research, "Most of the problems with young people in our schools are largely the result of what adults are doing outside of schools."<sup>74</sup> It seems true that the apple does not fall far from the apple tree!

As a culture, America has spent a lot of time and resources actually separating families, as parents and children go in different directions almost on a daily basis. We have instituted childcare so that parents with the youngest of children can enter the work force. For many families, priorities reflect a desire for a lifestyle that minimizes family and relationships. There was a time when families lived and worked together

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<sup>73</sup> Smith and Denton, 186.

<sup>74</sup> Murray Milner Jr., *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids: American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 201.

and the lives of youth were closely integrated into the world of adults. It was not until the 1930's that the majority of American children of high school age actually became what we would call today traditional school students.<sup>75</sup>

This is not to say that children should not go to school, but we should not be naïve enough to think that we created this educational system with the mere intent to serve the growth and overall development of our youth. There is reason to believe that we as a culture have devised these systems, our educational system included, to serve the needs and desires of our adult society. Evidence of this is found in the way our culture and educational system treats adolescents today. Smith and Denton address this within the context of adolescent health:

Much American public discourse is spent agonizing about improving the health of youth yet we structure the lives of youth in ways that obviously undermine their health: we schedule early school hours and overbearing homework requirements, for example, so as to virtually guarantee that teenagers get less sleep than their bodies need—then wonder why teens are surly, lazy and complain about being hassled. Our culture wakes up adolescents at 5:30 and 6:00 in the morning, not because it is healthy for their bodies and spirits to do so—we know scientifically that it is not—but so their parents can get to work for the corporation on time.

Thus, although many Americans talk about what a pro-family youth-loving society ours is, it is not entirely clear that many of our actual practices and institutions support those claims. Most of the structures and routines of American life actually pull families apart regularly and effectively. American work and education practices separate family members for most daytime hours of every weekday.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Smith and Denton, 183.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 190.

Chap Clark writes that until the late 1960's adult-led organizations and structures were designed to care for and cherish adolescents.

Unfortunately, that has changed. As a culture we became liberated by such movements as the sexual revolution of the 60's, the "live and let live" philosophy of the 70's and the "me" generation of the 80's.

Eventually, a culture once committed to family and the well being of adolescents began to unravel. Clark writes about this cultural shift:

. . . adults found themselves trying to find a safe place, a haven of security and rest. No longer was there energy and health available for giving to others. Instead, adults waged a fight for emotional and relational survival, and this in turn spilled over into the developmental longings of adolescents.<sup>77</sup>

For youth-directed organizations, institutions and systems, the shift in focus was not immediate; in fact, it evolved over several decades. In general, society has moved from being a relatively stable and cohesive adult community intent on caring for the needs of the young. Adults have become independent and fragmented, seeking their own survival. Unfortunately, adolescents have found themselves in a deepening hole of systemic rejection. This rejection, or abandonment, of adolescents is the root of the fragmentation and calloused distancing that are the hallmarks of the adolescent culture.<sup>78</sup>

As we examine social systems and adult attitudes, we must acknowledge that the impact of abandonment is real. As a whole, kids fall victim to societal trends and they have no political and economical

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<sup>77</sup> Clark, 33.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

power. Hence, the systematic abandonment of adolescents creates an undercurrent of anxiety and fear in today's youth culture. What lurks in the teenage heart is a deep sense of brokenness. Teenagers often see themselves as the source of the world's problems. Borgman wrote that:

A very confused society has made young people feel less able and more to blame. They have been told that as a generation they are stupid, performing at a lower level academically than students in other countries. Somehow they have been made to feel to blame for the stress of family life. They cost families more than ever before. They are in the forefront of violence and crime. It is not surprising that some feel themselves responsible for family tensions, their parent's divorce, or even the decline of the country.<sup>79</sup>

Of all the social systems that could fail teenagers, it seems the church's failure would be the most disappointing. Granted, there are many churches doing a great job at helping kids through the maze of life. But as a whole, it seems that the local church may have missed the mark. Chap Clark points out that the typical church has become program driven in regards to its youth ministry. In this type of system, the program or event most often becomes more important than the kids. When the program becomes the driving force behind the ministry, the experience becomes less than authentic at best and kids begin to put it on par with other social systems that are no better at meeting their deep relational needs.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the disappointment and let down teenagers have experienced with adults and adult systems, adolescents deeply desire to

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<sup>79</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough : A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Clark, 186.



have healthy, intimate relationships with caring, interested adults. Clark makes two significant assertions concerning this:

1. Adolescents are desperate for adults who care enough to look beneath the surface of their layered living, to stand beside them in the midst of their inconsistency, and to gently and patiently lead, shepherd and guide them into adulthood.
2. The problem is not that adults cannot reach adolescents. The problem is that adults have not invested the time, energy, and commitment to reach adolescents.<sup>81</sup>

These statements are telling. The blame of separation between adults and adolescents may lie squarely on the shoulders of adults. Yet, kids still long for us to know them. Here in lies the strategy for how we must communicate with teenagers. Before we ever speak to young people with an evangelistic mindset, we must know them first. The chasm does not exist because kids have pushed adults away; quite the contrary, adults have pushed kids away. The burden of leadership falls to the adult world. We must close the gap with teenagers rather than widen it. As Clark mentioned, it will take time, energy and commitment. But what choice do we have? The alternative is unacceptable.

Clark sums up the situation well, “The way midadolescents<sup>82</sup> have been forced to design their own world and separate social system has

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>82</sup> Chap Clark refers to teenagers as mid-adolescents.

created perhaps the most serious and yet understudied social crisis of our time.”<sup>83</sup>

### The loss of character in the adolescent culture

Whatever the cause may be the world of adolescent culture seems to have lost its moral fiber. In short, we have a crisis of character in today’s adolescent culture. Teenagers seem to lack honesty, respect for authority, respect for the elderly, basic social graces and manners and an overall sense of responsibility. Granted, not all teenagers are void of character, but as a population, we seem to have a real crisis on our hands. Former Senator and member of the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, Dan Coats, concluded as much. Based on his years of study and observation he concluded that the statistics do not point to a crisis of teen behavior, but rather a deeper crisis of teen character:

This is not a problem that will be solved with money or clinics or medicine. It has deeper roots in hearts and souls. In the mainstream of youth culture, it is deeply disturbing. It leaves a legacy of broken lives. But at the extremes, it is frightening—with children who seem drained of conscience.<sup>84</sup>

Senator Coats has struck at the root of the problem rather than the symptoms. Character or a lack of it has freed young people to behave without a moral foundation and what is worse is most young people think nothing of it. Once again, the adult population has helped this

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<sup>83</sup> Clark, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Mueller, 39.

attitude along by sending skewed messages. Smith and Denton identify the adult message sent out to teenagers:

Adults often impress on adolescents that what really counts is the personal character of one's inner self. And yet, in many other ways, American culture sends the clear message that what really counts is outward appearance and good looks.<sup>85</sup>

Adolescents observe the adults in their world who often live less than noble lives. Parents cheat on taxes, lie to their supervisors and cheat on their spouses. Even in the best-case scenario, it is hard for a kid to escape at least witnessing this negative behavior in their surrounding adult community. Many young people have few role models to help them shape and form their moral character.

#### The impact of immorality on adolescent culture

There should be little wonder about why kids do bad things. With the condition of character and moral fiber in the adolescent culture, it is only natural that poor decisions will be made. This section examines the different moral dilemmas teenagers face today.

#### *The Media*

The world of media has a powerful influence over teenagers and the rest of us for that matter. Consider how much media teens consume before they graduate high school:

By the time American children graduate from high school they will have spent 18,000-22,000 hours in front of the television compared to only 13,000 hours in the classroom. Children and

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<sup>85</sup> Smith and Denton, 189.

adolescents spend more time watching TV and videos than any other activity besides sleeping.<sup>86</sup>

Obviously, this amount of media must have an impact on viewers. Even worse, this particular statistic does not include the consumption of music, video games, Internet and printed media. With these factored in, the quantity and impact of the media is staggering.

Walt Mueller, in his book *Understanding Today's Youth Culture*, has a 140-page section dealing with the media. This is a substantial amount of a 394-page book. Mueller covers extensively the area of music and its impact. He goes so far as to note the particular themes today's music addresses and he also includes example lyrics that are eye opening. He does an equally credible job with the statistics dealing with visual media.

#### *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs*

Alcohol, tobacco and drugs continue to be a significant source of problematic behavior for adolescents. In the US it has become a behavior associated with a cultural rite of passage. Most smokers begin smoking during their adolescent years. The fact that 4800 teenagers begin smoking everyday gives credence to this frustrating truth.<sup>87</sup> As an example of the impact of drinking alcohol, drinking and driving ranks as the number one killer of adolescents in America today.<sup>88</sup> Drugs have also had a horrifying impact on our teens. Mueller points out that America's

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<sup>86</sup> Milner Jr., 159.

<sup>87</sup> Catherine Armst, "The Skinny on Teen Smoking," *Business Week*, December 2 2002.

<sup>88</sup> Mueller, 301.

high school students and young adults have a higher involvement with illicit drugs than any other industrialized nation in the world.<sup>89</sup> Mueller also covers extensively the involvement and impact of alcohol and drugs on adolescent culture.<sup>90</sup>

### *Violence*

A view into teenage violence:

1. Children in America are five times more likely to be victims of homicide than those in the rest of the industrialized world.
2. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that homicide by firearms is now the second leading cause of death (after motor-vehicle accidents) for fifteen to nineteen-year-old white students. It is the leading cause of death for African-American and Hispanic youth in that age bracket.<sup>91</sup>

It is shocking to consider what teenagers go through as they navigate the maze of adolescence into adulthood. Of all the obstacles they face, the overt presence of violence is deeply disturbing. History holds the stories of child labor, wars, slavery and horrible abuse. Unfortunately, much of that world still exists. Today, many kids enter their schools thorough metal detectors because school shootings have taken the lives of friends and neighbors. Young people once went to school with little fear, but today's teens often live in a state of fear and

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 304.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 297-334.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 34, 35.

anxiety. Physical and mental abuse is rampant as parents neglect their children and members of the clergy betray their trust. Simply put, the world is not a safe place for our children. Dean Borgman, in *Hear My Story*, writes extensively about violence in the adolescent culture. He moves the reader face to face with the violent nature of adolescence by bringing painful moments and events to life through the power of narrative.<sup>92</sup>

### *Suicide*

Suicide is now the third leading cause of death for youth ages fifteen to nineteen.<sup>93</sup> Only homicides and car accidents exceed suicide for the death of adolescents. Mueller reports some painful statistics:

1. The National Youth Suicide Prevention Center in Washington D.C., says that every hour of every day 228 teenagers in the United States will attempt to take their own lives. This adds up to two million teenagers a year!
2. Over six thousand teens a year kill themselves.
3. During any given year, 24.1 percent of high school seniors think seriously about attempting suicide.<sup>94</sup>

Suicide is a threat to all adolescents. There is no population that is immune. Clearly, as the rate of suicides continues to rise, young people face pressures and anxiety like never before.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Borgman, *Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth*, Xiv, 22, 141-158, 164-165, 172-180, 185-189, 266-299.

<sup>93</sup> Mueller, 337.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 337, 338.

I once invited a young man to a Young Life meeting while visiting the local high school for lunch. He came to that meeting and subsequently he came to camp that summer. While at camp he made a decision to follow Christ. Shortly after that decision he told me a chilling story. He said that the very day I invited him to a Young Life club, he had been planning his suicide. He planned to take his life that night, but instead he moved one step closer to Jesus. Suicide is real, but so is the hope that changes hearts forever.

### *Sexuality*

Sexuality in its most negative form has a devastating grip on adolescent culture. That which is beautiful and reserved for marriage has been perverted and abused by young people outside of marriage. Though it may seem subtler than suicide and teen violence, its impact is almost unbelievable.

1. Well over a million teenage girls become pregnant each year in the United States.<sup>96</sup>
2. Half of these pregnancies resulted in live births.
3. Four out of ten pregnancies result in abortion
4. One out of ten result in miscarriage.<sup>97</sup>

Over eighty percent of both adolescent males and females have lost their virginity by the age of nineteen.<sup>98</sup> This is no surprise in a culture

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 338.

<sup>96</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 191.

where pre-marital sex has become the norm. Sex, at some level beyond holding hands and kissing, has become the expectation between dating partners. Even worse, within the adolescent culture, there is a loss of definition for the word “sex”. Most often anything outside of traditional sexual intercourse is not considered sex. It has also become popular in recent years for teenagers to use each other sexually without any type of romantic relationship. This is called “hooking up” or “friends with benefits”. These encounters are designed to provide some form of sexual gratification without any form of emotional connection or relational responsibility. This is a destructive form of behavior.

The results of this type of lifestyle are obvious:

- Unwanted pregnancies
- Unexpected marriages
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Abortion
- Death from fatal diseases
- Emotional trauma and scarring
- False security
- Poor self-esteem

Despite these obvious outcomes, teens continue on this painful path. Dean Borgman, in his book, *When Kumbaya is not Enough*, has a

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



comprehensive chapter dealing with adolescent sexuality and the theology of sexuality.<sup>99</sup>

*Adolescents receive mixed messages*

Today's adolescents receive mixed messages from the society that surrounds them. As adults we raise concerns about the consequences of teen sexual behavior, yet we provide them with a media that says sex is to be enjoyed with whomever, whenever, however and wherever wanted.<sup>100</sup> As role models we often exhibit the worst examples possible as marriages disintegrate, adults choose multiple sexual partners and living together becomes as normal as marriage. The educational system predominantly teaches the technical aspects of sex education but forgoes teaching about the emotional issues that go hand-in-hand with sexuality and often fails to offer abstinence as a viable option.

Our society also expresses great anxiety concerning violence that permeates adolescent culture; yet, ironically, we entertain them with a media that is saturated with violence. Why does it surprise us that kids are sexually active and choose to hurt each other in the most physical and painful ways? Borgman sums this point up well:

Malevolent intention could hardly construct more efficient programs to turn human beings toward antisocial behavior than the mixed messages and frustrations that family, media, schools, or friends present to many children.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 189-219.

<sup>100</sup> Mueller, 44.

<sup>101</sup> Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, 5.

Somehow, some way, adult society must take responsibility for the health and welfare of adolescents. Understandably, young people are confused. They want guidance and wisdom, but few adults are either willing or capable of giving it. If this does not turn around, we will one day face a moral catastrophe. Chap Clark quotes the character from Anne Rice's novel *Belinda*. Rice uses her character to describe what it is like to physically reach adulthood without being equipped or prepared for adulthood. This is what Belinda says:

I had my first period when I was nine. . . . I was wearing a C-cup bra by the time I was thirteen. The first boy I ever slept with was shaving everyday by fifteen; we could have made babies together. . . . But what is a kid here? . . . You can't legally smoke, drink, start a career, get married. . . . All this for years and years after you're a physical adult. All you can do is play 'til you're twenty-one. . . . We're all criminals. . . . To be an American kid, you have to be a bad person. . . . Everybody's an outcast. Everybody's a faker.<sup>102</sup>

Belinda is the unfortunate face for many, if not most, adolescents in our strange and surreal culture that has arguably abandoned adolescents. We have extended the chapter of adolescents, but we have failed to use this extra time to equip and prepare our greatest resource, our children. Teenagers continue to struggle to escape the "cocoon", but they get little help from those they should be able to trust and depend on. Kids are confused and rightfully so. It is time we speak the truth into their lives and breathe hope into them in a way that only Jesus can do. This is the case for adults connecting relationally with adolescents and

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<sup>102</sup> Clark, 61.

speaking evangelistically to them in such a way teenagers can first feel loved and then feel understood.

### **Assessment of Young Life's traditional camp message sequence**

Because the focus of this project is the typical message sequence used at Young Life camps, I devised a written interview and sent it out to many of my colleagues and friends who are either on Young Life staff or have had a history of working within the context of Young Life. Some were older staff who have been speaking to kids in our mission for decades. Some were younger staff who have had far less experience, but bring an insightful eye.

Those who replied to interviews included:

Dave Sanders – Professor of Youth Ministry, Judson College

Cliff Anderson – Vice Pres. of Training, Young Life

Ty Salzgeber – Vice Pres., Western Division, Young Life

Dave Barnett – Area Director, Woodinville, WA, Young Life

Joe Walters – Regional Director, Latin America, Young Life

Renee Frustaci – Associate RD, Catonsville, MD, Young Life

Sarah Gammel – Area Director, Lisbon Portugal, Young Life

I also did phone interviews with Dr. Chap Clark and Prof. Dean Borgman. Dr. Clark is a professor of youth and family ministries at Fuller Theological Seminary. His work, *Hurt*, was extremely helpful in my investigation into youth culture and how to weave that knowledge in to

proclaiming the Gospel to teenagers. Dr. Clark did not participate in the written interview.

Prof. Borgman is a professor of youth culture at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is also the director of the Center for Youth Ministry Studies. Prof. Borgman was helpful in many ways, but most significantly, he gave an insightful and well-trained perspective into the strengths and weaknesses of the Young Life talk sequence. Since his responses were often not in direct response to the written interview questions, I have only included a few of his comments in this section.

Both Dr. Clark and Prof. Borgman were very influential in helping me rethink the philosophy of proclaiming the Gospel into adolescent culture.

The actual interview questions and responses are included on the following pages.

### **Interviews concerning Young Life's message sequence**

#### Biblical or theological issues concerning Young Life's talk sequence:

What obstacles or dilemmas have you dealt with concerning each of the following message topics?

1. *Introduction Talk – Do you assume the existence of God and speak immediately about Jesus?*

(Dean Borgman)

Dean began by saying that religious stuff is all mixed up in our

culture. He believes we need to break down the patchwork of religion. With that in mind, he'd like to talk about Jesus. Dean also feels strongly that a true presentation of the Gospel needs to include the creation in our message to adolescents. He felt strongly that this identifies them with God from the beginning and speaks to their self-esteem.

(Cliff Anderson)

No! I think we can assume that most American kids are open to God's existence but it's not a given. Conversely, since our primary thrust is Christology, I think it's legitimate to say, "I personally believe that creation is at very least created by intelligent design, and as I look at the universe and all the order and diversity that I see around us, I personally believe in a personal God who was the creator who loved us and was intentional about creation and about you and me. Please talk with me personally if you want more dialogue." Then I would like to see all speakers offer a one-hour optional discussion with interested kids.

(Dave Barnett)

I have been starting with Jesus in my first talk lately. My transition to Jesus is to say that knowing what you believe about God can be very overwhelming because of all the options, but I have found Jesus to be a simple starting place because of what He said and did. In some instances, I have also included a brief discussion on the Trinity, which I started doing a couple of years ago. My concern is that we set kids up for

confusion by simply saying that Jesus is God. If they do read the Bible, the interaction between Jesus and God would seem pretty confusing.

(Joe Walters)

I think we must not assume every kid automatically thinks there is a God. I think for those working in the “Bible Belt” this assumption may be easier to make, but our target audience should always be the furthest out, least interested and least knowledgeable teenager. I think a “Design demands a Designer” type talk is a good platform to construct the remainder of your messages upon.

(Renee Frustaci)

To some degree I do assume the existence of God. However, I certainly touch on the point that there is a God who existed before anything and created us, loves us and designed us. I actually talk about Jesus the first night then God the creator and Jesus, God in the flesh, on the second night.

(Sarah Gammell)

No, I think it is important to ask the question “Is there a God?” This question is a stumbling point for kids and I believe you will lose their ear if you don’t consider with them this basic question. I also think this question really helps frame the need for a discussion about Jesus. My second talk would then be, “So if there is a God, what is he like?”

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Yes, I begin with Jesus. Nowadays no kid wonders if God exists or was there a Jesus. Warm up, build rapport, but go for it with Jesus on talk number one.

*2. Person of Christ - Do you speak of the character of Christ or the incarnation or both?*

(Dean Borgman)

We have to talk about God sending his Son to us. We also have to talk about Jesus as a person. We have to cover both.

(Cliff Anderson)

I believe we must do both. The absence of “character” in our world among leaders and followers is declared by virtually all gurus’ writing on leadership. “Who the person is” affects what he/she does. Christ’s character and the “incarnation” are inseparable. The incarnation is about God taking on human form and being 100% man and 100% deity. This would be impossible for anyone other than God.

I also think that our “Person” talks must focus on both what Christ “did” and what he “said”. Studies on adolescent culture worldwide indicate that this is important to young people today. They want a God who can truly know how to communicate as well as demonstrate.

(Dave Barnett)

My first talk usually covers the incarnation aspect so this is primarily character. Also, I like to call it “identity” instead of character. I try to make “identity” one of the themes woven throughout the sequence (e.g. first discussing the question, what is God’s identity and can we even know it?). I love Peterson’s description of Jesus being “God moved into the neighborhood” for this because I think kids can relate to trying to figure out the new kid on the block. What is his or her true identity?

My main point is that God has no need and Jesus demonstrates this in his human form. Anytime I read the Gospels, the most amazing thing to me is how Jesus interacts with certain types of people. For example, he is seemingly mean to those that have the worldly power and authority and then He goes out of his way to pour into those that have nothing to offer (by worldly standards). That’s SO different than anything we experience in our lives.

The brief Trinity discussion leads nicely into that because this is why God has no need. Everything He needs is met in who He is. To illustrate this, I tell them to imagine that I had taken a group picture of us and flashed it up on the screen. Then I ask what would be the first thing that we look for. They all know the answer is their selves. They want to know if they look O.K.

Then I say that if we could take a picture of the trinity, God the father would only care about how God the Son looks, and how God the



Spirit looks. The exact same thing is true for God the Son and God the Spirit. All they care about is the other.

If you have no need, all you can do is give. I've chosen to highlight this because I think it's another example of how different God's identity is than ours. Jesus didn't need the 'important' people to like Him, but He always did what was best for them.

The other aspect of God's identity that I highlight as something that Jesus shows us is that God chooses to be in the midst of the world and lives ALL THE TIME (in the good stuff and the bad stuff). I do this because I think a most common belief (and one I still struggle with believing) is that God is distant and sometimes He cares but sometimes He doesn't – depending on what's convenient for Him. I know how wrong this is, but it's the natural way my mind sees it.

(Joe Walters)

I speak on both the incarnation and the person of Jesus. I begin with the incarnation. I think it does not make logical sense to speak first of the character of Jesus before you have established the incarnation of Jesus. Here is my basic line of thinking when it comes to the proclamation of the Gospel:

By nature of our design it demands that there is a Designer. God is that Designer. This begs for the next question, why? Why were we designed? A watch was designed to tell time. What about the human creature? Why were we made? I answer that question with a premise that

I build on throughout my talk progression. We were made for one purpose, to know and enjoy God now and forever.

If we were made to know God, how can you get to know someone who is invisible? This is where the incredibleness of the incarnation enters in. The following scriptures demonstrate this:

- Col. 1:15 (Phillips): “Now Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God.”
- Col. 1:19 (Phillips): “It was in Him that the full nature of God chose to live.”
- John 1:14 (Phillips): “So the word of God became a human being and lived among us, (Eugene Peterson translates this *and moved into our neighborhood!*) We saw His splendor.” (Eyewitness accounts!)
- John 1:18 (Phillips): “It is true that no one has ever seen God at any time, yet the divine and only Son, who lives in the closest intimacy with the father, has made Him known.”

So we look at this historical person named Jesus to see what the Creator God is like. (Now we can begin to look at the character of Christ.)

I ask one other question before entering into the person of Christ message. Why is it important to do this? Why look at Christ? Who cares what God is like? What might be in it for me? Col. 2:9, 10 has a powerful and compelling answer to those questions. Col. 2:9, 10 (Phillips): “Yet it is in him (*Jesus*) that God gives a full and complete expression of himself (within the physical limits that he has set himself in Christ). Moreover, your own completeness is only realized in him, who is the authority over all authorities, and the supreme power over all

powers.” We look at Jesus because our completeness as human beings can only be found in Him!

(Ty Saltzgiver)

I speak to both the incarnation and the person of Christ. As to the incarnation, I speak to not just what it is but what it means about God. We are asking a kid to give the thing most precious to him/her away, their hearts to God. They better know His heart if they are going to trust. Jesus gives the Father’s heart. He is Life, and trustworthy.

*3. Need of Mankind – What do you claim as the primary need of mankind?*

(Dean Borgman)

We need to communicate our sin in the form of “hurts”. Kids relate to this vernacular. Our “hurt” spills over into the rest of life and it hurts God and others. Jesus took our “hurt”. The cross meets our ultimate need.

(Cliff Anderson)

Oh, good question. I believe the primary need of mankind is to be properly related and reconciled to God. Christianity says this is only possible in/through Jesus. I believe that. Because of our inherited fallen nature (from Adam onward) we are separated from God, estranged, and in need of reconciliation. This fallen nature, or sin, causes us to also be self-centered and estranged in other human relationships as well. No one can achieve reconciliation with God on his own merit or by his own

religious efforts. All humans are in need of a Savior – Jesus.

As you can see, I am less and less interested in talking about ‘sins’, and trying to define what the heck those are. It is the separation issue that we must address. I believe that such an approach can be applied in urban settings, among kids with disabilities, international kids, teen moms, and yes, even good old wealthy, well-educated American kids.

(Dave Barnett)

Well, your question fits into my sequence perfectly, because the transition I make is that if God’s identity is to have no need, what’s our identity (below all of the masks and facades). That’s when I say that our identity is ‘all need’ and when that’s your identity, all you can do is take. This is why we are so different than God.

From there, I make the case that we were clearly created for relationship via a couple of life examples. First and foremost, we were created for a relationship with God, which is what makes all other relationships work. When that relationship is broken (sin), then our greatest need is to try to replace those things that our relationship with God was supposed to provide us.

Looking to have someone else meet our needs will always let us down. We’re all in the same ‘needy’ boat. That’s why our world is such a mess. Only God can meet our needs.

(Joe Walters)

Every aspect of the proclamation is critical. But I think it is very important to establish need. If we do a poor job here, the cross makes no sense. Sin is the key and operative issue here. This is the heart of humanity's need. How we communicate this idea in a palatable and understanding way to the teenage crowd is very important. Back to my introductory premises:

- God made us to know Him.
- Jesus has made God known to us.
- We say thanks God but no thanks! You may have made me to know you but I do not want to know you. So we turn our backs on God.

I try and use a few analogies to help illustrate this profound theological truth. Here are a few:

- Why do we celebrate on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July? The Colonies in America declared their independence from the sovereign rule of the King of England. They no longer wanted to be under his rule. This is what we have done with God. He has made us to know Him. We say no and declare our independence from Him.
- We have *divorced* ourselves from God. This concept is one many kids are all too familiar with and understand all of the relational damage that comes from divorce.

- Lastly, I like the analogy of equating sin with cancer. Cancer is a deadly disease that cannot be seen by the naked eye. But the results of its damaging effects can be seen in the tumors and sores that are a result of this deadly disease. Sin too is a deadly disease that cannot be seen by the naked eye but the results of it can be seen in the world around us: murder, broken relationships, etc. Like cancer these are only tumors. Cancer is a deadly disease that needs a radical cure. Sin too is a deadly disease that needs a radical cure. When one has cancer the first thing one must do is accept the physician's diagnosis of their condition. One cannot accept the cure without fully accepting the diagnosis.

(Renee Frustaci)

To be reconnected to God is mankind's greatest need. We were created by Him and for Him! I talk about all of the things we use to replace God with Romans 1:25 when what we really need is him.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Asked like that, it is to be forgiven and relieved of our burden of guilt, shame, etc, along with sin. But, kids long to be known fully and accepted and loved. They want a friend and to be a friend. They long to be genuine and like themselves. They want adventure and whole life (abundant life) they want purpose to live. All this comes from Jesus.

4. *Sin of Mankind – Do you include a narrative section of scripture?*

(Dean Borgman)

We should not leave kids hanging. We don't want them to feel condemned. We want them to feel a sense of God's brokenness. Instead of referring to this as the "need of mankind", we should refer to it as the "need for Christ". Christ is our only solution.

(Cliff Anderson)

Sure! I think everything we communicate to kids needs to be grounded in the Word. It is our authority. I'd focus though, on God's love and not the judgment passages.

(Dave Barnett)

Per the section above, my main objective is to show that sin is a relational issue, not a 'what you do' issue (the one causes the other). While I haven't used it lately, the prodigal son scripture would be a good narrative to illustrate the point turning our backs on God.

(Joe Walters)

Three scriptures become key for me as I share about sin:

- Romans 3:23 (Phillips) "For there is no distinction to be made anywhere; everyone has sinned, everyone falls short of the beauty of God's plan." From the vilest criminal on death row to Mother Theresa...all have fallen short. All mankind has this spiritual cancer. No one escapes this diagnosis of our condition.

- Romans 6:23a (NAS): “For the wages of sin is death.” There is a penalty to be paid for sin. Death is the absence of life now with God, (the very thing we were created to experience) and the absence of life with God forever when we die (hell).
- 1 John 8 & 10 (Phillips) “If we refuse to admit that we are sinners, then we live in a world of illusion and truth becomes a stranger to us. For if we take up the attitude ‘we have not sinned’, we flatly deny God’s diagnosis of our condition and cut ourselves off from what he has to say to us.”

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Yes, I always use a Jesus event. The difference between sin (condition) and sins is essential. It’s not always bad news, but explanation news, all the effects of sin to be made known. Haven’t you felt God is distant? Haven’t you noticed the world is messed up?

*5. The Cross – How much detail do you use in this message? Also, do you think that video is helpful?*

(Dean Borgman)

Details are OK, but we must have a thrust of sacrificial love in the message. Christ actually became our sin on the cross. He became a rapist, a murderer, a prostitute and any other vile creature you can imagine. As true as this is, it’s difficult to explain everything. We have to



acknowledge that this is a mystery. Besides, we must not take out the mystery of God.

(Cliff Anderson)

To me, “detail” is not the issue. I’ve moved away from a cross talk that’s full of the ‘blood & gore’ parts. I think that only induces sympathy for “poor Jesus” instead of awe at the extent of His love for us. I think the cross talks need to be oriented to explaining the love of God for his people and that he was even willing to suffer like this on our behalf so we could be brought back into this loving relationship. Kids are surrounded by parents, teachers, etc. who abuse them, take advantage of them, create conditional love, are full of performance, etc. I believe the message of Christ’s love on the cross is so compelling that we don’t need to try to “guilt” them into the Kingdom.

(Dave Barnett)

Per my identity theme, the main point I try to make about the Cross now is what I call the temporary identity of Christ, which is what happened on the Cross. I am mainly trying to answer the question “why did Jesus have to die?” and show that He is not just another martyr.

In the sin talk above, it’s important to flesh out the concept that sin causes death. I talk about the different ways we can die (physically, spiritually, emotionally). Sin is the cause of all three. So, when Jesus was on the cross, he paid the death penalty for sin in every possible way. The

physical was just part of that (and I do include some detail here, but I try not to go into as much 'gruesome' detail as I used to). I also accentuate the mental death perspective, which to me is the taunting and the way that everyone abandoned Him (things kids can relate to), and then the spiritual aspect is the most important one to me. In this case I refer to the scriptures that talk about Jesus becoming sin on our behalf. This is the temporary identity part. For a time, He became the exact opposite of who He was and was torn from His selfless, perfect love community because He was the embodiment of sin. To me, this is even more amazing than the physical torture of what He went through.

Because of that, I have stopped using video for this talk. The main reason being that I want to accentuate all aspects of His death, not just the physical (which I think is what the video really brings out).

(Joe Walters)

I have gone back and forth with using a video to help kids visualize the cross. It all depends on the quality and the length of the clip. There is a tender balance to be found here. A long or bad video may be counter-productive. An excellent reading and verbal description of the cross may be far more powerful!

Because I use the analogy of sin and cancer, I begin this message reviewing where I left them in the previous message. I was like the doctor who has come into the examining room and giving you my (God's) diagnosis of their condition. I said they had a deadly disease and that

there is nothing they can do to get rid of it except hope for a radical cure. Tonight I get the privilege of sharing with you God's radical cure for sin; Jesus paying the penalty for us. The focus here is on substitutionary atonement.

(Renee Frustaci)

I use details. I do not exaggerate or try to play on their emotions (although it can be emotional). I do use a video. I actually use visuals in most of my talks (not all video).

(Sarah Gammell)

I have never used clips from the Jesus films. That is not really what convicted me so I only use scripture. I like to start with the old system of sacrifices and the things we try to do to win atonement. Then I walk through the crucifixion and God's plan for atonement of sins.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Video is helpful, and music is a doorway to the heart.

Yes, you tell the cross "story" with no playing on emotions. I give a chance to kids to respond at the cross talk as well as the appropriation talk. I may use the ABC's here and have a fifteen-minute alone time for everyone.

*6. Resurrection and Appropriation – How do you connect these two topics?*

*What is your explanation for appropriation?*

(Dean Borgman)

No matter what, telling the resurrection is a must. Also, let them know that this is their choice to be made.

(Cliff Anderson)

Well, I think the resurrection is greatly under-communicated in Club/Camp talks. Paul says, that if there was no resurrection, then we are the most to be pitied. It's the resurrection that demonstrates God's power over sin and death. There is no longer ANY power or principality or force or death itself that can conquer us because of Christ's resurrection.

Appropriation is separate for me. The essence is John 1:11-13 (paraphrased), "Jesus came to his own created people but they didn't recognize him or accept his gift." Why? Is it because we want God to be created in our image and operate according to our expectations? Jesus appears before us all the time and we keep avoiding or failing to recognize him. In either case, we do not accept him and thus it's the same as rejecting him. Jesus has given us a great present, his presence, but only if we receive and accept Him into our lives. Appropriation then is the process of saying "Yes" to God's gift of Jesus into our lives.

(Dave Barnett)

I'm trying to stick with the relational theme and so I talk a lot about hope. I think that hope is one of the most powerful relational dynamics and in fact, losing hope is another way to die. So, I flesh out

what the disciples must have felt when He died. I'm sure his death would have caused them to become very hopeless, but the resurrection appearances poured hope into their lives

At this point, I want them to understand that this isn't something that just happened back then but is exactly what God is still doing. That's when I essentially tell them my testimony as an example (and this also ties up several stories I've told them along the way) and that it is the hope that God has given me through His conquering of death, every form of death. That leads me to another powerful (if not most powerful) relational dynamic: trust. My testimony has a huge theme of fear (primarily fear of failure) and God has directly dealt with me on that in a very powerful way (I think every kid and adult I've ever talked to can relate to the fear of failure piece). What this has allowed me to do is trust, which is what my new relationship with God is based on.

I like this because in one sense it keeps it simple (I don't run through the ABC's or anything else, I just talk about trust) and there are great examples of trust from the ropes course and other camp activities. It's simple to talk about trust as a concept but it's one of the most challenging things for us to do and is a constant battle.

I see appropriation as asking them the question, "now what are you going to do with the info/experience you have?" I tell them that the ball is now in their court and it's their choice whether or not to trust God.

I consider it VERY important to describe this as a process, and not just a one-time event (typical of anything that is relational). This could be a very important part of that process, but it's definitely the beginning and not the end of the process.

By the way, in case you're wondering, the reason I don't use the ABC's acronym is because I think it separates the Belief and Commitment part. When a speaker has done the ABC's for my kids, I kid you not that at least 90-95% of the guys I've taken to camp say they get the A and the B but just can't do the C which, unfortunately, seems to translate in their mind to "2 out of 3 isn't bad so hopefully God's OK with that." In my way of thinking, the B and C are completely intertwined and you can't say that you have one with out the other (in a relational context anyway).

(Joe Walters)

Resurrection is huge, huge, huge! Without a description of the resurrection Jesus remains like all other great spiritual teachers down through history. The resurrection sets him apart from all others. Go to Buddha's grave and you will find bones! Go to Confucius' grave and you will find bones! Not so with Jesus! He is alive and can be known by us! The argument from *Who Moved the Stone*, by Frank Morison is key at this point.

Appropriation: the Gospel demands a response. C.S. Lewis' Lord, Liar or Lunatic argument is a great one. He has not left us the option of

Jesus as a good teacher. He was either God which requires a response from us or he was nuts. Which do you say?

I finish Romans 6:23 at this point; “The penalty for sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” What Jesus has done is a free gift, a gift that can either be accepted or rejected. It costs you nothing. It is free.

(Renee Frustaci)

I have always done a resurrection talk – I found out early that some people don’t talk about the resurrection at all and I was shocked. But that is an aside. I have a theme that runs throughout the week of Jesus’ claims. Are they just talk or does he back them up with his life (which he does)? The resurrection is the culmination of his claims – he comes back just like he said he would – it’s all true!

I use a ropes course illustration to explain appropriation (actually two ropes on stage, I am in a harness with lobster claws) I explain to the audience we are designed to be connected to the wire just like we are created to be connected to God, but with sin we have taken the lobster claws, unhooked them, and thrown them on the ground. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection he reconnected the lobster claws to the rope. I don’t talk about choosing. I talk about the fact that the cure is available but it is not automatic. I talk about surrendering their lives to Jesus – reconnecting to him.

7. *Farewell Camp Message – Of all the messages, this one seems to be the least defined. What do you see as the purpose of this message?*

(Dean Borgman)

Talk about following Christ. Return back to the beginning of the message sequence and let them know that Jesus makes a difference with all our hurts. We must also warn them of the road ahead. Using Isaiah 43, tell them that you will not drown and will not be consumed in fire. But you will get wet and you will get burned.

(Cliff Anderson)

I prefer John 21, Jesus' encounter with Peter and the others after the Resurrection. It's the one miracle (catch of fish) that is not given to produce Faith in the unbeliever. It's for the disciples who were just like us – impatient, doing the thing they knew how to do best (fishing), and trying to not be despondent about losing Jesus. He comes to them in their place and helps them see that His call is still valid and He is with them and will be with them. I think that's the key concept we want to get across to kids.

(Joe Walters)

I want to accomplish two things. I want every kid to have a “peg” to hang their hat on in terms of where they stand with God. Secondly, I want to say a word to those who have begun life with Christ.



(Renee Frustaci)

I find this to be a difficult message because there is so much I want to tell them and can't really (because I can't really do it justice) and I want to balance the fact that not everyone has a relationship with Jesus. (I work hard on the new Christian walk in the morning to cover the cost of following Jesus, the Word, fellowship, prayer, etc. so I know that is covered.)

### Assessing Young Life's message sequence

1. *Is there some aspect of the Gospel missing from this message sequence?*

(Cliff Anderson)

That depends on who's speaking! The sequence of four points that's often referred to – Person, Need, Cross, Appropriation – was never meant to be institutionalized. It was Rayburn's excited response to reading John Stott who had that order in *Basic Christianity*. Rayburn himself often focused on several "Jesus" talks, and might skip sin or appropriation. He did so because he felt that the kids of his day just did not know about Jesus. In our day, I think it's different. I'd include a talk on creation (esp. for early adolescents because they so often think God made a mistake in creating them). I think we need to include the Resurrection and I'd be very light on sin/sins.

(Dave Barnett)

I think it's a mistake to not broach the subject of the Trinity. Also, though I thought my 'identity' theme pretty much followed the classic YL sequence, I did get at least one comment every week from someone saying that it was hard to follow my sequence since it was different than what they were used to. I tell you this because your line of questioning here is something I think is awesome to be talking about, but we do have to account for the affect that changing this has on leaders. If they feel lost or confused, cabin time does become much more difficult for them.

(Dave Sanders)

Yes. See the 'elements of the Gospel' from John Stott. Why have we decided to pick certain ones to highlight when they are all equally important to the whole Gospel? Much of our propositional truth expression of the Gospel goes back to the earlier days when we, as Christians, believed we had to stand against the modern view of the world with science and technology as the 'savior' of mankind. We are no longer in that cultural paradigm in the U.S., so we really need to update our messages to reflect this shift.

(Joe Walters)

Not from my perspective.

(Renee Frustaci)

Probably – I always feel like I could have said more. The Gospel is Jesus so I am sure there are aspects we do not touch on. I think the “Follow me” part is difficult to thoroughly communicate. Random thoughts are that we (as speaker) have to heavily rely on the leaders being mature, well trained and well liked (solid relationships with kids) which of course is not always the case, but for the most part works in our favor. Also, there is never enough time to share all of the possibilities of topics. You have seven 20-30 minute shots – how are you going to best utilize them?

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Not in my thinking. I recommend Jesus events (NT Gospels) as the springboard all the way through.

*2. Is the numerical order of this sequence most appropriate?*

(Cliff Anderson)

I partially addressed this above. I believe that the Cross talk should be introduced much earlier. As I indicated above, I want that talk to focus primarily on the love of God and want them to know that early and often in a camp week. In fact, I'd have more than nightly clubs. Many forget that originally YL had 2 Clubs per day – morning and night. We give them plenty of action & fun, I'd have a short Club in the morning with a message and discussion.

(Dave Sanders)

NOT AT ALL. In fact, with multi-tasking, post-moderns can enter the message progression from any point and hop to other points in the story without problem. The conclusion should have emphasis because it brings relevance to the stories' connectedness.

(Joe Walters)

What has been lined out here, yes I think it is most appropriate.

(Renee Frustaci)

I have probably heard 5 different sequences to communicate the same message. It seems like message 3, 4 & 5 are the only ones that don't move around. (I am sorry to say I think this is mostly due to program and their schedule.)

*3. Are we too broad or too narrow in our focus?*

(Cliff Anderson)

Totally depends on who's speaking.

(Dave Barnett)

I think we are almost too Christological in simply saying that Jesus is God. I think we need to broaden that at least a little to account for the Trinity. If we don't, I feel that there is a lot of scripture that would become very confusing to kids.

I'm guessing that borders on the heretical for many people so I'm

hoping that I am communicating it correctly. I definitely believe that Jesus was the visible image of the invisible God and that He was fully man and fully God. I'm just pointing out that to simply say, "Jesus was God" is not simple at all.

I guess I would also add that I do agree with those that say kids don't just need to understand the Gospel, but they need to experience it. I would say that by and large, our classic YL sequence is based on a classical apologetic (which is what helped me to believe so it is near to my heart) that is geared for understanding the message. I think we need to be much more creative in helping kids experience it.

(Dave Sanders)

Too narrow; we need to tell the story from multiple points rather than propositional truth. Watching commercials on TV in the States has made me aware of the multiple story lines that companies use to get their product across to people. Kids identify with stories where they draw conclusions and 'come to truth' rather than being told what is true.

(Joe Walters)

Hmmm. The breadth is **all** have sinned and the narrowness is in the fact that redemption **only** comes through Jesus. I do not think that is too broad or too narrow.

(Renee Frustaci)

I think we have a proven system that seems to work for the majority of people.

(Sarah Gammell)

We need to stay current with kids for our stories and illustrations. I also think we need to make sure our stories/illustrations are pertinent to all of the different kind of kids we have at club.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

We need more on following Christ.

#### *4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this message sequence?*

(Cliff Anderson)

Weakness: Thinking that what's been established by some YL leader somewhere and has now been accepted as if it were Jesus himself who established that sequence. We must break free from institutionalization of a message sequence and make it adaptable to the situation. Let's look at Jesus, who's style with Nicodemus was so different from his approach with The Samaritan Woman which was different from how he acted at the Wedding, and with the 5,000 and with the Centurion, etc.

Strength: Overwhelmingly our consistent strong Christological proclamation.

(Dave Barnett)

Even considering my comments above, I would still say that the greatest strength of our sequence is that we have given good thought to how best to communicate so kids will understand.

I would also have to say that another 'greatest strength' would be teenager's familiarity aspect with leaders. What happens in cabin time is so critical and if they are comfortable with the sequence, it helps a lot. I don't think that's reason enough not to change things, but I think it's important to understand that dynamic.

Our greatest weakness is that kids may not relate to our message sequence anymore. I think this is most evident in my comment on information vs. experience. Our balance might be off there.

(Dave Sanders)

Linear/sequential delivery is a weakness and straps us to an old paradigm.

Telling stories is our strength, and should be resurrected. Stories can come from media (DVD clips, etc.) as well as personal stories.

(Joe Walters)

At the risk of sounding like we are excluding the mystical power of the Holy Spirit, (the only one who can convict the heart of a man or woman) I think this progression is logical, biblical and theologically accurate.

### 5. *Further comments?*

(Joe Walters)

We have a delicate balance to strike as we work at effectively communicating the Gospel to disinterested teenagers. We must be able to communicate this message using images and illustrations that are within the current culture of today's teen, without ever allowing those illustrations and images to dwarf the power of the biblical account. One could speak all week without ever opening one's Bible. This would be a tragic mistake! Our authority is the word of God and kids need to see that physically as we read from the Word.

(Renee Frustaci)

I make it a point to always use the name Jesus instead of Christ or Lord. Jesus is a person. Christ and Lord are titles. Also, I talk about accounts from the Bible and not stories. Accounts seem more factual. Stories could be made up. It is subtle but it is just something I do.

### Assessment of excellence:

#### 1. *What are your thoughts on the overall state of proclamation in Young Life?*

(Cliff Anderson)

I've said it above. I'd rate it "Just OK". I think we've believed our own press and have an over-inflated view of our abilities. We're good, but



we're not alone. AND..... we have many limitations and narrowness of focus which needs to be dealt with.

(Dave Sanders)

Our message sequence is usually good, but it's an older paradigm. Younger staff speaking will not by nature use this sequential method, but we have many older folks in speaking roles.

(Joe Walters)

We should be constantly working to sharpen this. Recently we have done an excellent job preparing summer camp speakers. However, I think our weekly clubs are where we are the weakest. We need more hands on training for our volunteer leaders. I think we need to provide more resources that would be readily available.

(Renee Frustaci)

From where I stand I feel fairly confident in leader/staff's ability to proclaim the truths of Jesus. I am in an area that has very strong training of volunteers. Our staff is well equipped.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Jesus is still central.

*2. What trends have you identified?*

(Joe Walters)

The inclusion of music or video clips has been powerful when used appropriately, particularly when it is used in conjunction with the need talk.

(Renee Frustaci)

Young people hear a lot of promises from people (parents, friends, etc.) and they are disappointed by the lack of follow through. Talk is just talk. They want to know if you are for real – are you going to back it up with action. I think they want to know that same thing of Jesus. I have seen a lot of kids respond to the Gospel and then never make the transition of integrating into their lives.

(Sarah Gammell)

We use a lot more bells and whistles...movies, songs, etc. I think they are great when they help accentuate our message and not used as the starting point for our message

### *3. Are adolescents easier or tougher to talk to?*

(Cliff Anderson)

I think kids still respond to adults who they know care about them because they've earned it. As long as those adults have really learned their culture, they'll listen. If those adults just want to "tell" and not "listen", then they turn off.

(Dave Sanders)

They want to discover their own truth, so there has to be more respect from communicators and leaders to allow postmodern kids and the Holy Spirit to work out their salvation in His time.

(Joe Walters)

I think tougher. They are more “inoculated” against the message I think. This is why the need talk becomes a very key part of the proclamation.

(Renee Frustaci)

Relationships! Relationships! Relationships! I think if the leaders have done the relational work with kids they will easily listen to what they have to say. I think if a speaker at camp is relationally connected to the leaders as well as the kids I again think they easily listen.

(Sarah Gammell)

I think they are the same.

*4. As communicators, are we becoming more effective or less effective?*

(Cliff Anderson)

Those who think they know all the answers are much less effective and sadly I believe those are in the majority. They rely on lights, microphones, video clips, technology, singers, etc instead of sharing the Gospel.

(Dave Sanders)

Whenever we draw attention to ourselves as communicators as if we are the ones influencing their lives most, we distract from the community and local leaders who brought these kids in the first place, therefore ultimately less effective for long-term disciple-making. The communicator HAS TO set up the local leaders because they are the folks who live life with the audience.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

We are improving

5. *What do we do best?*

(Cliff Anderson)

Love kids and tell them about Jesus.

(Dave Sanders)

Know the world of kids because we are there all the time.

(Joe Walters)

Summer camp proclamation is what we do best.

(Renee Frustaci)

Relate the Bible and it's truths to the everyday lives of people young and old.

(Sarah Gammell)

I think we speak about Christ to teenagers like no one else does.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

Jesus is still central.

6. *What are your greatest concerns?*

(Dave Sanders)

Corporate approach to the Gospel and an insistence on propositional truth wrapped inside of a relational/incarnational approach to ministry. This is a real paradox for a group who touts relationships and relational theology.

(Joe Walters)

Putting the wrong people in front of kids to proclaim the Good News. My concern is the following:

- We want everyone to have a chance so we allow the quality to be compromised to allow for this.
- We ask people to speak who have not been properly trained.  
We make the assumption they will know how to do this.

(Ty Saltzgiver)

We try to accommodate the culture too much (not open Scripture, etc). We are not praying enough for Spirit to move.

## **Chapter Summary**

Through this chapter I hoped to focus our attention on the state of today's youth culture. I also hoped to identify teenagers as a primary target for relational evangelism and evangelistic messages. Finally, through interviews with several Young Life speakers, I examined Young Life's traditional message sequence aimed at un-churched, disinterested kids.

This chapter established that speaking to teenagers evangelistically is a challenge, but there is no population in more need than the adolescent culture. There is also no better target for communicating the Gospel than young people. Though there is a chasm separating adults from kids in our society, young people still desire healthy, wholesome relationships with adults. This communicates both hope and burden to our adult society.

With the interviews I discovered Young Life's message sequence to be less than perfect, but still very effective. Despite Young Life's past success with this message sequence, it may be time for an overall critical evaluation. Young Life's relational style and sharp focus on Christ and kids is a winning hallmark of their ministry. However, there may be a lack of creativity in the linear message sequence. Also, there may be a need for more content concerning areas such as the creation, the Trinity

and the cost of discipleship. Again, this message sequence has enjoyed decades of success, but it may be time for a few adjustments.

- CHAPTER FOUR -

AN EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE SEQUENCE: AIMED AT UN-CHURCHED,  
DISINTERESTED ADOLESCENTS

Suicide. Violence. Sexual promiscuity. Substance abuse. Abandonment. Teen pregnancy. Cheating. Busyness. Self-mutilation. These are symptoms of a hurting adolescent culture. The brokenness of this culture screams for our attention. As evangelists, those in youth ministry and youth work should find the world of stricken teenagers irresistible. It is our privilege to walk beside the broken and hurting. It is our responsibility to speak truth and love into their lives.

After examining the theology of proclamation, we are hopefully compelled to share the news of Christ with teenagers. We have also learned that an incarnational style of ministry can empower adults to move in the world of adolescents and command their attention through the intimacy of wholesome and healthy relationships. Ultimately, by loving kids unconditionally and logging time in their world, we earn the right to be heard. This principle is essentially true with any audience, but it is especially true within adolescent culture.

Obviously, the case for reaching teenagers with the Gospel is loud and clear, but what should we say to our young friends? When given a venue to communicate the Gospel, whether a camp, a retreat, an event or a weekly meeting, how do we communicate the most effective message



possible? Finally, what does an evangelistic message and message sequence look like? This chapter is dedicated to answering these questions.

The primary objective of this project is to provide a framework to use in creating an evangelistic message sequence and provide a literal series of manuscripts that reflect that framework. This will provide a tool for others to use as a springboard to derive their own messages for lost teenagers. Most youth ministers have had little training in this area and tend to have a poor understanding how to weave a series of messages together to form a complete picture. More often than not, young youth ministers tend to imitate what they have heard and often commonly fail to have much theological depth in their message. The intent of this project is to help young speakers move beyond the phase of imitation and into the realm of understanding and creativity.

This chapter will include the following sections:

- A Framework and explanation of an evangelistic message sequence
- A camp message sequence
- Seven message outlines for camp<sup>103</sup>
- Message Comments<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Complete manuscripts can be found in the appendix.

<sup>104</sup> This will be included at the end of each message.

## **A Framework of an Evangelistic Message Sequence**

Imagine yourself standing in front of a rowdy group of teenagers. The room is filled with three hundred and fifty kids who have no affection for Jesus and couldn't care less about God. Yet, unnerving as it is, it's your responsibility to herald God's message. You have the great honor of introducing teenagers to the creator of Heaven and earth. What do you say? Where do you begin?

The answer is simple. You begin with the truth and you end with the truth. You share with them the heart-felt message of a loving God who created all mankind. You tell them about a God who loves them lavishly. So much so that he literally sacrificed his only son so they could live. You tell them about Jesus. This is the Gospel, but there is so much to tell and so little time to tell it. Hence, the speaker must discern what key aspects of the Gospel should be conveyed through a series of messages. Young Life has worked hard at discerning this and their end product has been extremely effective. Let's take a look at the basic message sequence used by Young Life staff and volunteers over the years. This basic sequence can be expanded or condensed for different venues. Later, we will use this basic sequence to develop a series of camp messages.

Here is the basic message sequence:

1. Introduction
2. God's character

3. Person of Christ
4. Need of mankind
5. Work of Christ
6. Appropriation of Christ
7. A life with Christ

Each of these categories, with the exception of the introductory talk, can include several messages depending on the time allotted at a particular speaking venue. Most importantly, these categories include the most essential aspects of the Gospel that adolescents need to hear and understand to make the best decision possible concerning their relationship with Jesus. This sequence is often expanded into a semester-long series of approximately ten to fifteen talks or modified for other speaking venues such as retreats and camps. Let's look at each category.

#### The Introductory Message

The introductory message is not meant to be a “warm up” talk or a pointless message. It is critical in that it prepares the audience for what's to come. It lets kids know what's ahead and what to expect. This is the case whether it's used in a camp venue or a semester-long setting. This is also the message used to develop rapport with the audience and to win them over. With this in mind, it is incredibly important to make this first talk a winner. During the initial few minutes of the introductory message, the first impression is made. If the first impression is weak or

lame, it will take a lot of effort to regain the ground already lost. When kids walk away from this message, there should be a sense of enticement. They should leave wanting more. This is not to say that kids should be entertained, but they should be highly engaged.

The introduction is also important in setting up expectations. It's an opportunity to be honest and candid with our young friends and ask them for permission to speak the truth to them. I want kids to know that I will be open and vulnerable with them. I will be real and sincere. My expectation for them is to try and do the same. I want them to know that they can approach me later and ask questions. I want them to have the expectation that I am accessible and open.

Finally, and most significantly, the intro message is when we introduce the topic of God. We want kids to know we'll be talking about God through the course of our messages. Since this is our first talk, we have to be careful. We have to bring up this topic in such a way that it intrigues and stirs interest in kids rather than turning them off. How we engage our audience in this message will impact how successful we are at conveying the Gospel to them throughout our message sequence. Keep in mind that this talk may be used in combination with another message in a camp or event setting due to time limitations.

Questions this category should answer:

- What will we be doing here in the future?
- What can I expect from this place?

- What will we be talking about?

### God's Existence and Character

This category deals with the existence of God and who God is. First, depending on the audience, we may have to begin with the question, "Does God exist?" In several parts of the United States and in many other cultures, the existence of God is a given. For example, in Texas, it is safe to assume most will believe in the existence of a higher being. However, in a place like the Czech Republic, this couldn't be further from the truth. Kids in these cultures and cultures like them, come from an atheistic or non-spiritual perspective. Not only are they disinterested and un-churched, they are often suspicious or resistant. Some may even be verbally abusive towards those who present the Gospel. Knowing this, it's important to get teenagers of this mind set to at least consider the possibility of God's existence. As difficult as this may sound, a speaker who is engaging, relational and presents with an air of humility and vulnerability can break through to a resistant audience.

After addressing the existence of God, we then move to addressing God's character. We want to answer the question, "What is God like?" This is the time to deal directly with the misperceptions of God; God the policeman, Father Time, a great cosmic force, just another Santa Claus, a big ball of light, an angry old man, or an uncaring schizophrenic God. These are just to name a few. Kids, and adults for that matter, have

many perceptions of who God might be. It is our responsibility to give them an accurate perception of who God really is. This category may cover several messages as we deal with these topics. It's important to share with kids the biblical picture of God. They need to see him as creator, as loving, as kind, as gracious, as powerful and as one to be greatly revered. When kids hear of a God that created them individually and created them with purpose, their sense of esteem and self-worth begins to blossom and grow.

Questions this category should answer:

- Is there a God?
- If there is a God, what is God like?
- Why did God create me?

### The Person of Christ

In this category, two major topics must be addressed: first, the incarnation and second, the life of Jesus. These two areas may take up several messages within a given sequence depending on the speaking venue and allotted time. However, if time allows for only one message in this category, both points should be included.

Kids have to “experience” the incarnation. They have to hear about God’s master plan to save the world and to save each of them individually. Within this context we introduce kids to both the deity of Christ and the mankind of Christ. We are literally introducing teenagers to the one and only theophany, Jesus Christ. Yes, it’s a heavy concept.

And yes, it's mysterious. But ultimately, it's true and there is great power in this truth. We should never guard our young friends from the truth.

It is the incarnation that gives credence to the second area in this category, the life of Jesus. We bring kids into the presence of a Messiah that loves them unconditionally. We tell them about a Christ who claims to be God and backs it up with miracles that only God can do. It is our objective for teenagers to see Jesus not only as he was, but as he is! If time permits within the sequence, this is a great place to camp out and tell lots of stories about Jesus. Our goal is very simple, with each message we want kids to walk away with a "snapshot" of Jesus. This is our opportunity to help teenagers get to know Christ personally. We want kids to see Jesus calm the storm. We want them to hear his words as he talks to the woman caught in adultery. We need kids to witness Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. We want kids to know that others trusted him with their lives. With each story we tell, we are weaving together a tapestry that portrays the real life of Jesus. We must whisper into their hearts, Immanuel, God is with us.

Questions this category should answer:

- Why did God become a man?
- Who did Jesus claim to be?
- How did Jesus back up his claim?
- What kind of person was Jesus?
- Can Jesus understand me?

### The Need of Mankind

Here we explore mankind's pursuit of purpose and fulfillment and we examine the doctrine of sin. This category allows us to address the fall of humanity and the consequence of our sin. Without a doubt, teenagers know that we live in a broken world. They may not be able to verbalize it, but they know that the world we live in is filled with problems. They also know they feel empty inside and long for something more. Unfortunately, they don't know that this comes from our consequential separation from God. Nor do they know that the sin of mankind is the source of our brokenness. Simply put, because of our sin we have no relationship with God. This is a painful message to share with kids, especially when we know them by name.

The topic of sin allows us to first address the lifestyle of teenagers by addressing their need for meaning, purpose and fulfillment. We talk to them about their obvious "need" in life before we discuss the source of this need, sin. As a group, adolescents continue to seek out comfort in places that perpetually fail them. These places include drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, violence, busyness, grades, unhealthy relationships and performance. This is the time and place to graciously confront character and lifestyle issues, but our role is not to confront these issues in hopes of making kids feel worse than they already feel. Our goal is to help them understand why they do what they do. Teenagers reach out for comfort in places that will always disappoint them. Our role is to let



them know there is a place they can turn. There is a way to find fulfillment. In fact, there is one way and one way only and we need them to know it is through Jesus.

After graciously dealing with teenager's and their "need", we then introduce them to the concept of sin. They need to know the source of our problems. They need to know why the world is so broken. Typically, Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23 are great choices to lay everything out on the table. It's our responsibility to let them know that everyone is infected with this disease called sin. No one can avoid its initial grip. We are all born into sin. It's equally critical they learn the consequence of sin is death. Though it is absolutely essential that we pass on this knowledge to our dear friends, we must not do it in such a way that pushes kids away from Jesus. We must be empathetic and gracious in our approach and let them know that we are no different. Everyone is guilty of sin.

As we understand today's adolescent culture, we know that they often feel lost, alone and abandoned. With this in mind, we must be careful to not make them feel guilty and ostracized by God. Though they need to know the consequences of sin, they also need to know that the gift of God is eternal life for those who trust him. Unfortunately, speakers will often choose to give kids the bad news of sin and then send them on their way until the next day or the next week with no hope of escaping sin's grip. In this scenario, kids are meant to wrestle with their sin and

feel the weight of its consequence. In theory, it's meant to prepare teens for the next message on the Cross.

Unfortunately, when we leave kids hanging like this, we may do more harm than good. As we communicate the message of sin to teenagers, it may seem wise to let them fume and suffer for a while, but it only gives them more evidence that society has abandoned the adolescent culture. We risk appearing just like other adults who have pushed them away. Instead of taking a path that is arguably manipulative, we have to be creative enough to help kids understand the brokenness of the world and its personal impact without making them feel hopeless and unwanted. Again, our role is one of heralds. We are the messengers, not the executioners and our message is a message of hope.

Questions this category should answer:

- What is sin?
- What do I need most?
- Where do I turn for comfort or fulfillment?
- How does sin affect my relationship with God?
- How does sin affect my relationship with others?

### The Work of Christ

This category deals with two critical topics: the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. Of all the aspects of the Gospel, this is the very foundation of Christianity. Without the cross and resurrection all

else fails. In a semester long series, it should be a priority to at least give each of these topics time for one message.

When communicating the cross, we have to answer the question, “Why did Jesus die?” They need to know that Jesus was not accidentally murdered. He was not a victim. Instead, he was a volunteer. He gave his life freely and did not resist. Kids need to know that Jesus died as a perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for the sin of the world. He died so that we could live! This was and is God’s plan to redeem a lost world.

Though the message of the crucifixion is emotional by default, speakers tend to get caught up in the graphic details of the story with the intention of making it more emotional than it needs to be. There is certainly reason to include the details of Christ’s suffering, but we should never attempt to manipulate a young person’s emotions. Some would say that this borders on being cultish. And certainly, Jesus does not need our sympathy. Instead of focusing on what happened, we need to focus on why it happened. Jesus death is our atonement.

The resurrection of Christ is literally the turning point in history. It is the hinge that the door of Christianity opens on. Without the resurrection, Jesus is just a lunatic or liar according to C.S. Lewis.<sup>105</sup> Hence, it is critical that we present Christ’s work to adolescents. Strangely though, this portion of the Gospel is often left out or glossed

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<sup>105</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books, Broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality*, 1st HarperCollins ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 52.

over as we speak to teenagers. Unfortunately, it seems that once the cross is delivered, we're done. But the cross is no more than a man dying in vain if we don't have the resurrection.

Other than the fact that someone rising from the dead should totally blow your mind, what is the significance of the resurrection? This is the question we have to answer in this message. The resurrection is really the climax of the story we call the Gospel. This is the moment that Jesus conquers death, not for himself, but for all of mankind. This is also the point that he proves once and for all that he is exactly who he says he is, God. Jesus is God in the flesh. He is truly the Son of God.

It is so important for our audience to know that Jesus is worthy of their trust and their commitment. They need to know that there is hope in our world and that it is found in Christ alone. The resurrection is the proof of Jesus' deity and will be a catalyst for encouraging our friends to give their lives to Christ.

Questions this category should answer:

- Why did Jesus have to die?
- What is the significance of the resurrection?

### The Appropriation of Christ

The time of appropriation is a time of action! This is when we move from dispensing information to challenging young people to trust Jesus as their personal savior. The word "appropriate" means to take ownership or possess something that once belonged elsewhere. That is

our exhortation to adolescents. Our desire is for teenagers to claim Jesus' death as their own and experience God's forgiveness and move into an eternal relationship with the very creator of the universe. Ideally, our friends will be ready to make an informed decision about a personal relationship with Christ after hearing the previous talk progression.

In this message, we want to help kids understand why they should make a commitment to Jesus. We want them to know that Jesus is not just one of many ways to Heaven. Rather, Jesus is the one and only way to eternity. We must emphasize the fact that Jesus claimed to be God and that he proved his deity through many miracles, changed lives and his own resurrection. Teenagers want something to believe in and someone to trust. They need to hear from us that Jesus is indeed that "someone".

A major aspect of this message is helping kids understand how to make this commitment. Unfortunately, many believe that our salvation does not occur until we say the "sinner's" prayer. But this is not true! Our salvation occurs the moment we trust Christ with our lives, the moment we truly believe Jesus is our hope, whenever this may be. Our words of prayer are much more an act of "professing with our lips" than an act of receiving salvation. Knowing this, it is difficult to communicate the best possible process for any one person. Nonetheless, we have to give it our best shot. We need to give kids a picture of what they are

mentally and spiritually doing as they enter into this eternal bond. It's not meant to be a checklist or a task.

There are many ways to communicate the imagery of appropriation to teens. One way is to share the ABC illustration. This is a catchy way to help kids remember the process. We use this illustration by explaining the following:

- "A" stands for "admitting our need for God."
- "B" stands for "believing in Jesus as my personal savior."
- "C" stands for "committing my life to following Jesus."

We give this process to kids as a path to follow rather than a formula to fix everything. It's our responsibility to let them know it's not the power of these words that will save them from the consequence of sin, but it is the condition of their hearts. Do they really admit a need for God? Do they really believe that Jesus died for their sin? Do they really want to commit to following a Jewish carpenter named Jesus?

Finally, using the analogy of marriage is a great way to help kids understand the concept of appropriation. Here is the idea. Long before we commit to marriage, we typically go through several steps relationally speaking. First, we have to become aware that the other person exists. Next, we engage in conversation with the hopes of learning more about each other. Now, if things have gone smoothly up to this point, we may decide to date each other and consider if there could be more to this relationship. If things are still going well we may take a more serious step

and become engaged. Now, up to this point, the relationship has grown closer and closer, but we can still back out. We haven't made the absolute commitment. The purpose of each step up to this point has been to test the waters and discover if this could be a lifetime commitment. Then comes the big day. We're all dressed up and we take the plunge. We say "I do" and "I will" and suddenly, we're not dating any longer. Now, we're committed. What once was temporary has become forever.

We go through a similar process with Jesus. We become aware of his presence. We express curiosity. We may even decide to take our experience to a new level by going to church or joining a Bible study. But eventually, we move from being curious to being committed. At this point, Jesus becomes a "forever" relationship, rather than something we are just investigating. Obviously, this analogy falls to pieces when kids see "divorce" as an option for any particular commitment. However, it is a great way to take teens through the steps of a relationship and expresses the fact that following Christ means entering a personal relationship with him. And unlike the world's view of marriage, this is a permanent relationship.

Another key ingredient to communicating the idea of appropriation is to help adolescents understand what a commitment to Christ involves. A commitment to Christ does not mean a commitment to changing ourselves. What it does mean though, is allowing God to change us from

the inside out. It means opening our lives up to the spirit of God. We need to communicate clearly that this is a commitment to a relationship and like any other relationship it takes two for it to be successful. And you can always bank on Jesus holding up his end of the bargain. This relationship will never fail because of him. We are the weak links in this arrangement!

Questions this category should answer:

- Why should we commit to Jesus Christ?
- How do we make a commitment to Jesus?
- What does a commitment to Jesus involve?

### A life with Christ

Within the overall framework, this would be the easiest message to bypass. However, this is an important category in the message sequence. Realistically, this talk is the first step in equipping our friends who are new in their relationship with Christ. If this message is a part of a semester long series, it could easily become several messages.

Here we have the opportunity to talk with teenagers about the exciting journey they have begun. First, we need them to know this is, in fact, a journey. Jesus is not a one-time pill or a quick fix formula. He is a lifetime friend that deserves our time and attention.

Kids also need to know the journey is filled with hurdles and obstacles. So many think a relationship with Jesus makes life easy and problem free. We need to warn them that we were merely sitting on the



bench, off the field and out of the game when we were apart from Christ. Now, everything has changed. With Christ, we've entered the fray and bumps and bruises are probably ahead. However, joy and peace and purpose and meaning are gifts we will enjoy with Christ.

Kids need to know that there has always been a battle ensuing around them, whether they knew it or not. Now is the time for them to enter the battle and make a difference in the world. This is our opportunity to empower teenagers and prepare them for what's ahead.

We have the responsibility to help them understand how to navigate a broken world as Christ followers. A speaker needs to take this opportunity to give teenagers some insight on how to live a life with Christ. Here are few areas that should be talked about:

- Finding a mentor
- Prayer and study
- Worship
- Church
- Choosing friends
- Guarding their minds
- Guarding their hearts
- Cost of discipleship

These messages provide the chance to prepare teenagers for what's ahead. It's our job to set them up for success and give them the best shot possible in life. If time permits, we may want to provide a panel discussion or allow kids to have a question and answer time. In a camp or retreat setting, it is wise to have a special time blocked off at the end of the experience for new believers. This allows the speaker to

communicate directly with kids who have just trusted their lives to Jesus.

Like with any new relationship, there is apprehension and nervousness in this journey with Christ. As heralds, we need to do everything possible to guide adolescents through the initial steps of this adventure.

Questions this category should answer:

- How do we experience a daily relationship with Christ?
- How does this commitment affect my world?
- As a follower of Christ, how should I live? What do I do?

### **Comments on Message Sequence Framework**

For the most part, this framework was designed and implemented by Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life. Jim was inspired by John Stott's book, *Basic Christianity*. In his work, John Stott formulated a basic theological blueprint of the Gospel. He saw the Gospel in four basic parts: Christ's Purpose, Man's Need, Christ's Work and Man's Response.<sup>106</sup> Jim discovered that this blueprint translated extremely well into a logical and manageable message sequence for lost teenagers.

Overall, this framework is an excellent tool for creating evangelistic message sequences. It can be used to outline a single evangelistic message, create a sequence for a retreat or camp, or it can be used to form a message series for a semester of meetings. It is a great help to

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<sup>106</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).

anyone who speaks to lost teenagers. However, there are a couple of potential weaknesses that should be mentioned.

First, this exact framework shifts from the existence and character of God to the person of Christ. This direct transition becomes confusing as we refer to Jesus as both God and the Son of God. As we communicate the deity of Christ teenagers begin to wonder if we are referring to Jesus as two different beings. It begs the question, are there two Gods? And, if Jesus is God, then how can he also be the Son of God? This family tree seems to get stranger by the minute! Hence, it is important to convey the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to prevent confusion for kids. A lot of adolescents are sharp enough to catch this inconsistency in our language, when in fact it is no inconsistency at all. It is merely an omission. Certainly, communicating a topic like the Trinity can be a theological feat for any speaker. And arguably, a good presentation of the subject could take up all our time. But for the sake of clarity it's vital that we address the issue of the Holy Trinity.

A simple solution is to take a couple of minutes to briefly share the idea of the Trinity. Let them know that our God is a triune God. Tell them the names of the three members: God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. It's OK to let them know God is mysterious and that the concept of the Holy Trinity is difficult for all of us to grasp. Does it sound a little crazy? Yes. Should we hide it? No. Is it true? Absolutely. Besides, if we truly understood all the ways of God, we wouldn't need him.

Rather than taking more than a couple of minutes on this, a good idea is to inform the audience that you will be available to talk about this if anyone has questions. The key is to really make oneself available. It might be profitable to set up a question and answer time as well. By taking a brief moment to explain this admittedly difficult doctrine, we will bring much greater clarity to our message flow and meaning.

A second area of concern is the subject of eschatology. Within this framework there is no time allotted for an eschatological message. Though eschatology is important, it can be a distraction and even an unhealthy focus for teenagers. They can become enthralled by the nature of eschatological thoughts, which may have a feel of fantasy to them. Rather than present this subject in a normal message sequence, a small group setting or an interactive seminar can be good alternatives.

As a logical outline for creating an evangelistic message sequence, this framework has been time tested and proven. In short, it really works. Granted, over time as kids and culture shift, so will our techniques and styles. We'll have new songs, new technology and new forms of media. But the Gospel itself never shifts. The story of Jesus remains the same. The person of Christ, the need of man, the work of Christ and the appropriation of the Savior will be as critical tomorrow as it is today.

## **A Camp Message Sequence**

Speaking at a Young Life camp is always a great privilege. The philosophy of a Young Life camp is summed up in one word: excellence! Everything needs to be done with excellence. The facilities, the food, the activities, everything is measured to excellence. The presentation of the Gospel is certainly no different. The goal of the camp speaker is to share the Gospel in the clearest most winsome way possible. The first step for any speaker is to develop a message sequence that will serve this goal. This is true for any outreach camp speaker.

As a camp speaker myself, I understand this goal all too well. Outside of caring for my family, this has been the greatest and most enjoyable responsibility of my life. As I prepare to speak at camp, I use the framework presented in this project as my guide. A Young Life camp normally affords a speaker seven chances to speak. That means I have seven shots to deliver the Gospel. Here is what my camp message sequence looks like:

1. Introduction
2. Person of Christ
3. Need of Mankind
4. Sin
5. Cross of Christ
6. Resurrection & Appropriation
7. Life with Christ

I made some obvious adjustments to the framework, but the flow is still the same. This sequence is the outline for the following manuscripts.

### Camp talks – seven manuscripts

#### *Explanation of Camp Setting*

These camp talks were originally outlined and presented at Young Life's Malibu Club. Malibu is located in British Columbia just north of Vancouver, Canada. The length of camp was four weeks with four sessions of seven days each. There were an average 350 fifty teenagers at each camp session. Virtually all of the campers were from the Pacific Northwest. 55% of them were female and 45% were male. Most of the campers had very little knowledge of Christ and very few of them claimed to know Christ. An average of eighty kids made first time commitments to Christ each week.

#### *Explanation of Club*

Everyday, typically in the evening, kids and leaders gather for club. Club is literally the highlight of the day. Of course kids think that water skiing, rappelling or some other cool activity will be the highlight, but it just isn't so! Kids are drawn into the high energy, up-beat tempo of club. Club is normally a combination of wild games, good music and a team of characters that are hysterically funny. At its best, club appears to be absolute mayhem, but it's really controlled chaos at its finest! Everything about club is meticulously organized. It is designed for one thing, to

prepare teenagers to hear the presentation of the Gospel. The following camp talks were presented in this setting.

### Talk #1 – Introduction

Title: Take a Look!

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10.

Big Idea: Jesus knows your name!

Application: Take a fresh look at Jesus.

#### I. Introduction: Flying Food

The purpose of this intro is to break the ice. The idea is to smash food and watch it fly. It's a sure winner for building rapport.

Transition: I hope you enjoyed that as much as I did! I also hope you know we are here so that you can have the best week of your life!

#### II. Preview of the week

Let me tell you what we're all about here at Malibu.

A. Adventure – Tell them about the weeks activities.

B. Relationships – We are made for relationships.

i) Introduce my family with a slide show.

ii) Talk with them about friendship.

iii) Introduce cabin time.

C. Truth - We promise to tell you the truth.

i) Define truth as something to believe or trust.

ii) We believe in teenagers.

iii) We believe in life to the maximum.

iv) We believe in the Life-giver.

Transition: I want to challenge you to do something this week you may have never done. I want to ask you to at least take a look at this man named Jesus that I mentioned to you. Let me tell you a story about another person who did the same thing. His name is Zacchaeus.

### III. Zacchaeus the tax collector: Luke 19:1-10

- A. Zacchaeus took a risk. V 1-4
- B. Jesus knew his name. V 5, 6
- C. Jesus dined with a sinner. Verse 7
- D. Zacchaeus' life was changed. V. 8, 9
- E. Jesus seeks us out. Verse 10

### IV. Application

- A. Take a good look at Jesus.
- B. Just like Zacchaeus, your life could be changed.

### V. So, what do you believe?

- A. Signs video clip – A conversation about hope versus fear.
- B. So, do you believe in miracles or coincidence?
- C. Goal for the week – You will know where you stand with Jesus.

### *Message Comments*

There is a lot of ground to cover in a short time during this message. Using the message sequence framework, this talk actually covers the categories of Introduction, God's existence and introduces the Person of Christ. With only seven chances to speak, I decided to move



forward quickly with this talk. My hope was to protect the time for the other topics.

My initial objective in this message was to get their attention, develop rapport, and tell kids what to expect from camp. My second objective was to encourage them to take a fresh look at Jesus. By far, this is my priority. Rather than going into great detail about the existence of God, I used the video clip from *Signs* to ask kids what they believe. The objective here was to challenge the audience to ask themselves what they believed. My hope was to open them up to the idea that God could exist. Eighty-four percent of US teenagers believe in the existence of God<sup>107</sup>. With this knowledge, we can move quickly from the idea of God to the person of Christ. My final objective, which is deeply connected to expectations, was to inform the audience that they would have absolute clarity on where each of them stood with Christ at the end of the week. This goal is really more for me. This becomes my compass as I step forward through the message sequence.

The introduction to this talk is a definite winner or a definite loser. It all depends on the audience. Exploding food is never a good idea in front of impoverished people or those who work with impoverished people. What appears to be a complete waste of food can be very offensive to some. For example, I would never use this intro in a place like Romania. Even in a US context I always get a consensus from adults and

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<sup>107</sup> Smith and Denton, 41.

leaders who will be at the camp to see if this intro is appropriate. Now, for the right crowd, it's a winner. Kids will laugh until their bellies ache and any stereotypes about a "Christian Camp" will be blown away. The secret to this intro is using the right foods. They have to "explode" well when they are smashed. Also, make it fast and leave them wanting more.

Interaction with the audience is always a great thing if you can manage the crowd. To have interaction and provide focus I will use a periodic catch line. For example, in the section concerning truth, I ask the audience for their permission to tell them the truth. To do this I use the catch line, "Repeat after me: Dave, you hunk of burning love, tell me the truth and nothing but the truth!" Through out all my talks I will do this periodically with different points. It sounds a little crazy, but it really works if you can manage the crowd. Besides providing interaction and focus, it's also memorable. By the end of the week, everybody's name becomes "you hunk o' burning love!"

It would be easy to leave a scriptural narrative out of the introductory talk, but this would be a mistake. Telling a good story is powerful and it is memorable. If any part of this message had to go, it wouldn't be the text. The story of Zacchaeus is the vehicle that my primary purpose rides on. I want kids to take a fresh look at Jesus just as Zacchaeus did. I want them to hear that Jesus knows them just like he knew Zacchaeus. More significantly, I want them to know that Jesus wants to be with them just like he wanted to be with Zacchaeus.

The homiletical idea, “Jesus knows your name”, communicates intimacy to adolescents. In an adolescent culture tormented by abandonment and loss, kids long for intimacy. They want to be known. This basic theological truth, that Jesus knows each of us personally, speaks directly to the hurt and pain of today’s teenagers. These few verses can really have a positive impact by tapping immediately into the core issues teenagers face today.

### Talk #2 – The Person of Christ

Title: No Strings Attached.

Topic: Person of Christ.

Big Idea: God’s love is unconditional.

Application: We are designed for a relationship with God.

#### I. Introduction: The Pizza story

This a personal story about my wife caring for me when I was seriously ill one late night.

Transition: Why would Kristy care for me like this? Because she loves me! I mean she really loves me a lot. Come on now! Look at me! How could she not!? In moments like that, surrounded by pepperoni, I think she may love me unconditionally.

#### II. Define unconditional love

- A. I Corinthians 13:4-8 – Use this as the ultimate definition.
- B. No strings attached – Love without expectation.
- C. God’s unconditional love – This is the source of unconditional love.

D. The depth of God's love.

- i) The incarnation of God – Jesus walks among us.
- ii) The deity of Jesus – He is 100% God.
- iii) The humanity of Jesus – He is 100% man.
- iv) Transition - Let me give you a snapshot of Jesus in action.

III. A snapshot of unconditional love – Matthew 8:1-3.

A. Larry the Leper – Introduce the character of the leper.

B. The definition of leprosy:

- i) Leprosy destroys the nerve endings in your body.
- ii) Leprosy prevents you from feeling pain.
- iii) Without pain you will have serious injuries.
- iv) Because of the infection, the human body literally begins to rot away.
- v) Leprosy was thought to be highly contagious.

C. Leprosy 2000 years ago:

- i) Lepers were segregated from society.
- ii) Lepers could not come in contact with healthy people.
- iii) Lepers had to announce themselves within a hundred feet.
- iv) Lepers were humiliated, lonely and unloved.

D. Larry's only hope – The leper seeks out Jesus.

E. Larry's humility – The leper knelt before Jesus.

F. The reaction of Jesus – He touched the leper.

G. The reaction of the crowd – shock, wonder and fear.

IV. Application:

- A. God loves you unconditionally.
- B. Because Jesus was a real person he understands your life.
- C. Because Jesus is God he has the power to change your life.
- D. Love has a name, and his name is Jesus.

V. Conclusion – What could make me stop loving you?

This is an illustration communicating my personal choice to love my children no matter what they do. This is similar to God's choice to love us unconditionally.

*Message Comments:*

The purpose of this message is to introduce kids to the person of Christ. This talk is used to convey both the incarnation and the character of Jesus. It is critical to communicate that Jesus was both God and man simultaneously. They need to know that Jesus can empathize with them because he was a kid once too. But they also need to know that Jesus is divine and has the power to change lives.

Beyond the incarnation, I want kids to know Jesus the man. I want them to know what he was like and what he's still like today. Of all Jesus' characteristics, I chose his compassion, his unconditional love for people as my focus. Teenagers are living in a world that is dangerous and painful. Western culture has separated them from the adult world and rarely do they experience a real and wholesome love or affection from a grown-up. I believe the idea of unconditional love really scratches where

they itch today. Jesus' compassion and desire for a relationship with a broken teenager speaks directly to the deepest need of adolescents.

A mistake I made in this talk was my failing to address the doctrine of the Trinity. It was only after so much reading and research that I realized how confusing this could be. This is the message to provide a brief explanation about our triune God. I think it's a mistake to talk about both God and Jesus and speak as if they are one in the same and yet separate. Significant time shouldn't be given to the topic, but it should be addressed.

### Talk #3 – The Need of Mankind

Title: Runnin' on Empty!

Topic: Need of Mankind.

Big Idea: Only Jesus will meet your needs. Everything else will leave you empty.

Application: Ask yourself, is it possible that only Jesus can truly fulfill me?

#### I. Introduction: The dead end street.

This is a personal illustration about a car race I participated in as a high school student. The street we were on turned out to be a dead end. The dead end street is a metaphor of my own life as a teenager.

#### II. Personal Testimony:

I use this opportunity to open up and tell the story of my life before I followed Jesus. I am honest about my past sexual promiscuity, violent

nature and self-centered attitude. This builds deep trust with young people.

Transition: I'd like to introduce you to a couple of other people who also experienced great need.

### III. Jesus, Jairus and the Bleeding woman - Mark 5:21-43

#### A. The plea of a desperate father. V. 21-24

- i) Jairus was a man in great need.
- ii) I was in great need. This is an illustration about my daughter when she was very sick just after her birth.

#### B. The faith of a desperate woman. V. 25-34

- i) A woman in great need – She had bled for twelve years.
- ii) The power of believing – Her faith healed her.

#### C. Do not fear. V. 35-42

- i) Which voice do you listen to? – Jairus' friends tried to pull him away from Jesus.
- ii) Jesus gives real life – Jesus raised the little girl from the dead.

### IV. Application

A. Jesus is alive today!

B. Only Jesus will meet your needs.

C. Turning anywhere else will only result in disappointment.

### V. Looking for love in all the wrong places.

A. Blaze Pascal - We all have a God shaped hole in our heart.

B. Glove Illustration - Using a dishwashing glove I will demonstrate that the glove only fulfills its purpose when it's on my hand. I will put other objects in the glove, but none of them will fit. This is analogous to the God shaped hole in each of our hearts. Nothing but God will fit.

VI. We are designed for a relationship with Christ.

A. We are created by God and created for God – Col. 1:15,16

B. Corvette Illustration – A convertible corvette is not made to be a potted plant. It's made to go fast.

VII. Jesus is the life giver.

A. Jesus is the only source of life.

B. Illustration: The Sixth Sense: "I see dead people, but they don't know that they're dead." This quote is reflective of anyone who does not have a relationship with Jesus.

C. Our stuff just doesn't work. - Let me show you what I mean.

- Over 70% of HS seniors have experimented with drugs.
- Over 3 million teenagers are alcoholics.
- Every day in America 13 teenagers commit suicide.
- In the last 20 years the rate of suicide has tripled for ages 16-18.
- 1 of 7 teenage girls becomes pregnant.
- 1000 teenage girls become pregnant every day.
- Over 30 million abortions have occurred in America.



## VIII. Perception

- A. Self-perception – We tend to have a lousy view of ourselves.
- B. *Don't let me get Me* by Pink – Play first minute of this song.
- C. God's perception - You are royalty.
  - i) The princess – Directed to the women. These are comments made to the girls to let them know how God sees them.
  - ii) The knight in shining armor – Directed to the men. These are comments to the guys to let them know how God sees them.

## IX. Conclusion

The world is broken and so are we. The only place we can turn for help is Jesus.

### *Message Comments*

The purpose of this message is to help kids understand the need everyone feels. Primarily, it's meant to point teenagers in the direction of Jesus. I want them to at least consider Jesus as a possible solution to their need. This is an extremely personal message aimed directly at the heart of adolescents and their world of experience.

The testimony in the beginning builds trust. I want the audience to know I empathize with them. This is an opportunity for them to see into my life in hopes that this will facilitate an intimacy between us.

The glove illustration is a graphic picture. It offers something for everybody. The idea is to use objects like a condom to represent sex or a cross to represent religion and place them into the glove. Obviously, none

of the objects fit the glove and give it “life”. The only thing that works is the human hand. Most kids in the audience will identify with something I put into the glove. The main objective is to illustrate their need for Christ as opposed to all the things that fail them. Just as the hand fits the glove, Christ fits our heart.

The stories of Jairus and the bleeding woman provide good examples of people who experience great need and who eventually turned to Jesus. Both Jairus and the bleeding woman are very different people. It is especially powerful that one is a woman and the other a man. I believe this greatly increases the chances of teenagers connecting with one of these characters.

#### Talk #4 – Sin

Title: A Disease called Sin.

Topic: Sin.

Big Idea: Everybody has been infected with a disease called sin.

Application: Because of our disease, our relationship with God is broken and the consequence is death.

I. Introduction: Audrey stuck in the toy box.

This is a humorous story about my daughter getting stuck upside down in a toy box.

Transition: This is a great metaphor for us. You see we need to understand our condition. Just like Audrey, we are all stuck, upside

down, in a broken world and there is nothing on our own that we can do about it.

II. Mark 2:1-12 – The paralyzed man and his four friends.

- A. Jesus was a popular guy. V. 1, 2
- B. Four friends brought the paralytic to Jesus. V 3, 4
- C. Our sin is Jesus' priority. V. 5-9
- D. Jesus is God! V. 10-12

Power Point Presentation: Roman numerals III through VIII correspond to several slides within a power point presentation. A copy of each slide is included in the appendix.

I. Inside-out - The problem we have is rooted deep on the inside of each of us.

- A. We only see the tip of the iceberg
- B. What lurks beneath- It's a disease called sin!

II. Definition of SIN

- A. Sin is a Greek archery term for missing the mark.
- B. Anything less than a bulls-eye was considered a sin.
- C. Any time we miss the mark of perfection, we commit a sin.
- D. Sins are the symptoms of SIN.

III. How do I measure up?

- A. Many use the moral relative standard.
- B. The ultimate range: Mother Theresa and Adolf Hitler.
- C. Are you better than Adolf?

D. Are you as good as Mother Theresa?

IV. Making the cut by our moral relative standard

A. Yikes! The bad go to Hell.

B. Wheeew! The good go to Heaven.

V. God's standard.

A. Mother Theresa doesn't measure up.

B. We definitely don't measure up.

C. Only perfection meets God's standard.

D. Roman's 3:23 - All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

If we miss the mark one time, then we are guilty of sin.

E. Iodine Illustration – The slightest sin taints us and keeps us from perfection, God's standard.

VI. Consequence of Sin

A. Death - Romans 6:23 - The wages of SIN are death....

B. A broken relationship with God is the consequence of our disease.

i) God is Holy and nothing unholy can enter his presence.

ii) Because we are infected, we are separated from God and cannot come into his eternal presence.

iii) This is not the way it's supposed to be.

VII. Conclusion

A. We're all stuck, upside down and we can't get out.

B. Illustration: The emergency room patient. Just like a badly wounded patient cannot fix himself, we can not get ourselves out of sin.

C. Romans 6:23b – The gift of God is eternal life.

*Message Comments*

Without a doubt, this is a painful message to deliver. The primary purpose of this talk is to communicate with kids that everyone, without exception is infected by sin. In conjunction with this knowledge, kids must hear that our sin is God's number one concern in each of our lives. Just like the paralytic and his friends, we often want God's help with things that have no eternal value. God is clearly concerned much more with our eternity than he is the temporary.

I have used a power point presentation to provide a visual illustration of sin. It uses the philosophy of relative truth. After defining the condition of sin I use this presentation to momentarily encourage kids to compare themselves to other people. It assumes that some people are good enough to make it into eternity on their own merit. Ultimately, some people are better than others. However, the presentation makes it clear that God's standard is perfection and no one meets God's standard. The slides for this presentation are found in the appendix.

The tone of this message is critical. It's essential to communicate the truth about sin, but how we deliver this painful news is extremely important. It's easy to adopt a condemning posture and use a tone of

judgment rather than a tone of love and grace. Teenagers should not walk away feeling abandoned by God and rejected by Jesus. They shouldn't walk away feeling condemned by the speaker either. It's common in the Young Life world to leave kids in limbo for a day after the "sin talk". The idea is to let them know there is nothing they can do about this condition to save themselves. They cannot meet God's standard and there is nothing they can do about it. This is a commonly used strategy to allow kids to wrestle with their own sin and feel the weight of its consequence. In a world where adolescents feel abandoned and lost, I don't believe this is an acceptable strategy. In fact, I think it's hurtful. If our goal is to treat teenagers with unconditional love and acceptance, they need to leave this message aware of their condition, but also feeling a sense of hope. I want them to feel pursued by God, not abandoned by him.

#### Talk #5 – The Cross

Title: Paid in Full!

Topic: The Cross.

Big Idea: Jesus died in our place and paid for our sin.

Application: Because of Jesus, you can choose life over death.

#### I. Introduction: Clint Almond

This is a powerful story of a high school student killed in a tragic car wreck. His mother had an unbelievable and desperate desire for him to come home. This is analogous to God's view of his children.

Transition: Let me tell you what Jesus did to get us home. But I'd like to tell you through the eyes of someone who was there.

II. The Crucifixion through the eyes of a Roman soldier. This is a first person account.

- A. Begin monologue.
- B. Jesus, betrayed by his friends.
- C. Jesus was accused during a mock trial.
- D. A company of soldiers tortured Jesus.
- E. Jesus volunteered for the cross and crucifixion.

III. Why did Jesus have to die?

- A. He paid our debt.
- B. Iodine and bleach Illustration: I will mix bleach in with the water that was "tainted" the previous day and the water will become clear again.
- C. The debt must be paid.
- D. Forgiveness is a free gift to be received.
- E. Sin is removed.

IV. Application

- A. The cross demands a response
- B. The two criminals on the cross: Luke 23: 32-43. One criminal mocks Jesus and one trusts Jesus.
- C. Which cross are you on?

V. Conclusion: Scenes from the Passion.

*Message Comments*

God is broken over our sin. He despises the chasm that separates mankind from himself. And he has given the greatest sacrifice to pay our debt and overcome that separation. Our God is a redeemer God. The message of Jesus' crucifixion is a portrait of the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus died on the cross to erase the sin of mankind. He is our atonement.

Communicating this message is the priority of the cross talk. Jesus died for our sin. This is the essential ingredient of the message sequence. Kids have to know why Jesus died. In fact, this is much more important than how he died. We must express to teenagers that upon Jesus' sacrifice, the gift of eternal life is available to every man and woman. As simple and clear as this message sounds, many speakers fail to convey this necessary theological truth.

I do believe there is good reason to tell the story of the cross. It's good for kids to hear the extent of God's pursuit for us. The caution is to avoid over sensationalizing the cross or trying to make it more emotional than it already is. I have chosen to use a first person account to tell the story because I believe it helps me to focus more on Jesus and his attitude than on the gruesome details. I do not avoid the facts, but I try hard to communicate the Roman guard's connection with the person of Jesus. I want kids to know that Jesus was not a victim. He does not want our sympathy, but he does want our trust.



I use the two thieves at the end of the message to help each camper come to grips with his or her belief concerning Christ. I want them to have clarity on their position. I will end with a music video to prepare them for a twenty-minute time of solitude called a solo. This is an opportunity for them to spend a few minutes in silence to consider what they've heard this week. In the age of iPods, the Internet and constant media, these moments are far and few between for young people. This is typically a powerful moment for most.

Talk #6 – The Resurrection and Appropriation

Title: Coming Home.

Topic: Resurrection and Appropriation.

Big Idea: Jesus is no myth. He's alive and well!

Application: You can trust Jesus with your life

I. Introduction: You are my hero!

The purpose of this introduction is to draw the audience into the moment by engaging several of them personally. I will point out some great moments during camp when kids accomplished things no one ever thought they could do. I will transition in to the resurrection pointing out that no one really believed that Jesus would rise from the dead the way he did.

Transition: Well, let me tell you, if you want to see a real hero in action, just take a look at Jesus. This is the greatest comeback of all time!

II. Jesus rose from the grave.

A. The burial of Jesus.

- i) The stone in front of the tomb sealed the grave.
- ii) The wax seal provided a third level of security.
- iii) The Roman guards stood watch.

B. The tomb was empty! Mat. 28:1-10

- i) The Angel of the Lord appears. V. 1-4
- ii) Jesus is alive! V. 5-7
- iii) Jesus appears to the women. V. 8-10

III. Application – What does this have to do with me?

- A. Jesus is God – He claimed to be God and proved it.
- B. CS Lewis – Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic or God.
- C. You can trust your life to Jesus.

IV. The evidence demands a verdict.

- A. Jesus is not a myth or legend – He is a real historical figure.
- B. Jesus appeared at least eleven times.
- C. Over 500 witnesses physically saw Jesus.
- D. No other religious leader compares to Jesus.
- E. The resurrected Jesus has changed millions of lives.

V. So, what's your objection?

- A. I don't know enough.
- B. I'm not good enough.
- C. What about the pygmies?

D. I want to wait till I'm older.

E. I don't want to change.

## VI. How do I respond to Jesus?

### A. Reactions to the resurrection.

- i) John believed immediately. John 20:8
- ii) The guards denied Jesus' resurrection. Mt. 28:11-15
- iii) Seeing was believing for Thomas. John 20:26-29

### B. It's as easy as ABC!

- i) Admit – First you have to admit to God that you need him.
- ii) Believe – Secondly, you must believe Jesus died for your sin and rose from the grave.
- iii) Commit – Finally, you need to commit your life to following Jesus.

C. It's a free gift - All you have to do is receive it. You can do nothing to earn it.

VII. Conclusion: Coming home! Jesus wants you to come home to him just like you are. Let me paint the picture for you with a story by Phillip Yancey: (I will read an excerpt from *What's so Amazing About Grace?* A copy of this is found in the appendix.). He wants you to come home. What will you say to him tonight?

### *Message Comments*

It is not uncommon for speakers to leave out the resurrection in their message sequence. However, this is an absolute mistake. The

resurrection gives credence to the cross. It also gives evidence as to why someone should trust Christ. It is the hallmark of his divinity. Sharing the resurrection story is a must.

The resurrection flows naturally into the message of appropriation. In this particular talk I've decided to address several common objections many adolescents have about trusting Christ. I have also used the ABC model to give the audience a pathway to verbalize their new commitment. It's important to let kids know that this is an opportunity to give their lives away to Christ, but this is not a time to pressure our friends into making a decision to please others. Again, our responsibility is to herald the message. It's the Spirit's job to win them over.

At the end of the message campers will once again experience a twenty-minute solo. During this time a significant number of young men and women will trust their lives to Christ.

#### Talk #7 – A Life with Christ

Title:               Seize the Day!

Topic:             A Life with Christ.

Big Idea:         You are not alone; cling to Christ!

Application:     Your focus on Christ is essential to your survival.

- I. Introduction – Simon Says! Play a game of Simon Says until you name a champion. The purpose of this game is to remind everyone that the voices of temptation will be whispering in their ears. When they get home there will be plenty of “Simons” to drag them down.

II. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Mt. 14: 22-33

- A. A busy day! – Jesus had just 5000 people. V. 22, 23
- B. The storm – Character is forged during stormy days. V. 24
- C. Jesus walks on water – Jesus is both divine and human. V. 25-27
- D. Peter walks on water – Seize the day! Focus on Jesus. V. 28-32
- E. Jesus, the Son of God! – The disciples trusted Jesus and so can we. V. 33

III. The adventure continues - This week is just the beginning of your great adventure.

A. For the Christ followers:

- i) Living life in the valley after the mountaintop.
- ii) Cling to Jesus.
- iii) Always get back into the saddle after mistakes.
- iv) You can always come home to Jesus.

B. For the curious:

- i) I respect your choice to say no.
- ii) You being here is no accident.
- iii) You are always welcome at Young Life.
- iv) God always loves you unconditionally.

IV. A time of exhortation

- A. Remind the ladies God has made each of them a princess.
- B. Remind the men God has made each of them to a knight in armor.
- C. Have them all stand and repeat after me:

- I am a person of integrity! *Repeat*
- I am a person of courage! *Repeat*
- I am a person of honor! *Repeat*
- With God's help, I can change the world! *Repeat*

V. Close with a song. We will use whatever song has been most popular for the week. The purpose of this moment is to both end on a high note and create a time of closure.

#### *Message Comments*

There is a unique challenge with this camp message. Ideally, there should be two distinct groups in the audience during this particular talk. There should be kids who have made new commitments to Christ in the recent two days and there will be plenty of kids who haven't. Somehow, we need to address both groups.

In the message sequence framework, the "Life with Christ" category is meant to provide a guide for kids and can include several talks. In a camp setting, I have taken this category and I've tried to primarily get kids ready for going back home. I want them to know that life is normally lived in a valley and it's not always a mountain top experience. The new believers need to know that all the old stuff that used to tempt them at home will still be there. I'm hoping to prepare them for the storms ahead.

To maximize my time, I will have a separate seminar the night before just for the new believers. During the new believers time I will cover the topics mentioned in the basic framework, such as church and

worship. The idea is to prevent a sense of segregation between the believers and non-believers during the last camp talk. I want everyone to feel included as much as possible.

During this message I want the kids who have chosen to not follow Christ as of yet to feel the same acceptance they felt on day one. So I will address them directly and let them know that their staff and leaders will go back with them and continue to walk with them. As a mission, we want them to know that our relationships with them are truly unconditional.

Finally, I take one last shot at affirming every camper as men and women by expressing once again God's view of them. I have them repeat the words after me because I believe there is power in the spoken word. This time of affirmation has the potential of empowering kids to believe that just maybe, God really loves them!

- CHAPTER FIVE -

REFLECTIONS, OUTCOMES AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Speaking the language of adolescents is tricky business. Their world is fluid and dynamic and their directions are ever changing. Teens are often cruel and critical to one another and reaching out to them is typically a painful experience. They need us but do not necessarily want us. They have a culture unto themselves and adults do not enter freely. To walk among adolescents, to be known by them, requires a great sacrifice.

This project was meant to help me and others become better “speakers” of the adolescent language. More specifically, a goal of this project was to offer a framework for developing an evangelistic message sequence aimed at un-churched, disinterested teenagers. Primarily, I wanted to take this defined framework and use it to create the best possible message sequence. My intention was to use this series in a Young Life summer camp setting.

As I began this project, I initially used the basic message sequence framework to devise a camp message sequence. Then I began work on outlining the seven camp talks. My next step was to write a manuscript for each message.

I wasn’t really prepared for what happened next in the process. I expected the research to be tedious and somewhat unfulfilling. But just



the opposite happened. My time of research, thinking and writing was rich and rewarding. I began to work on the research for the theology of proclamation and incarnational ministry. I accumulated the best possible books on youth culture and began to read and take notes. As I dug deep into the process, a puzzle began to pull together. My past years of relational ministry and speaking with teenagers mixed with my research gave me a much deeper well from which to draw. Without a doubt, the process of this project has greatly influenced my thinking as an evangelistic preacher within the world of adolescents.

### **Outcomes**

The process of creating this project has empowered me as a holistic communicator within the realm of adolescent culture. What I have always suspected and observed through my professional experience was confirmed. Teenagers are definitely in pain and experience a level of brokenness as never before. Though I've always believed this, my own experience has been a narrow and biased one. I now know qualitatively that my experience with adolescents is not unique. It is actually very common. Before this project, I really didn't know how to adequately identify or verbalize the issues young people face today. I wasn't academically equipped to properly communicate the trends that grip the hearts and minds of teenagers. Granted, I have logged my time with kids. I've entered their world and walked along side them. But in the last few

months, I have developed a new and greater sense of understanding. I have had the proverbial “ah-ha” experience.

Because of this process, my camp message sequence is a much better product. With a deeper understanding of adolescent culture I am more equipped to speak to the hearts of my friends. My target seems to be steady and my aim is well defined. I know how to speak to issues more deliberately with greater impact. For example, because I now understand the cultural magnitude of adolescent abandonment, as I communicate the doctrine of sin, I do not want kids to feel abandoned by God or by me. I will always let them know there is hope.

I have also developed a far greater comprehension of Young Life’s basic message sequence. This process gave me an opportunity to fully understand the basic sequence and identify its strengths and weaknesses. I was able to examine and answer questions that I have pondered for years. Questions like:

- Do we begin our messages with Jesus or do we need to address the issue of God’s existence first?
- For someone who embraces the doctrine of election, is it appropriate to tell teenagers that it’s their choice to trust Christ?
- Do we mention the trinity or do we avoid it?

There are many other questions that have been rattling in my brain for years. Over the last several months I have been able to formulate answers that have been reflected in this project.

As a student of adolescent culture, I have identified several significant trends. In doing so, I am now much more prepared to assist families who face painful issues with their children. I am also a better resource to the local church and community. I was hoping to become a better speaker for kids, but I have also become better equipped to speak with adults.

### **Final Thoughts**

By trade, I am a youth minister. By calling, I am an evangelist. The process of forming this project has reinvigorated my heart for both. More than ever, I am convinced the adolescent culture is the best fishing hole in the world. My desire for kids to know Jesus wakes me up in the morning and keeps me awake at night. I cannot help it. Entering their world and speaking their language is my passion. I hope that this body of work will help to inspire others to speak the language of adolescent culture.

I've had the privilege of heralding the Gospel to teenagers for many years. It has been my great honor to tell them of God's unconditional love. I've dreaded sharing with them our condition of sin and I've relished the moments when the Spirit wooed them home. As I've stood before kids I've watched them transform by God's holy message. I pray now, that my

words will be crisper, my thoughts clearer and my message will be a life-giving arrow that pierces the hearts of un-churched, disinterested adolescents.

- APPENDIX 1 -

***Signs Manuscript***

***Do you believe in miracles?***

*The family room lights are off now. The TV is still on. The SOUND IS MUTED. There are a couple glasses of Bo's water on the television now. The fourteen lights are still hovering on the screen. Morgan is asleep on Graham's lap. Bo is asleep on Merrill's shoulder.*

MERRILL (whispers)  
Some people are probably thinking this is the end of the world.  
*Graham turns his sleepy eyes away from the screen to Merrill.*

GRAHAM (whispers)  
That's true.  
*Merrill looks his brother in the eyes.*

MERRILL (whispers)  
Do you think it's a possibility?

GRAHAM (whispers)  
Yes.

MERRILL (whispers)  
How can you say that?

GRAHAM (whispers)  
That wasn't the answer you wanted?

MERRILL (whispers)  
Can you at least pretend to be like you used to be? Give me some comfort?  
*Graham thinks it over.*

GRAHAM (whispers)  
...There are all different ways you can tell that there's someone really there watching out for us. You see signs. Sometimes they're little ones. You think of someone. The phone rings. They're on the phone... Sometimes they're big, like fourteen lights hovering over Mexico City. Sure, there are a lot of people watching this who think this could be a bad thing. But there are a lot of people watching this, who think it's a miracle; sign of God's existence. It's all in how you look at things Merrill.

What you have to decide is what kind of person you are? Are you the type who believes in miracles and looks for signs or are you the kind who believes things just happen by chance?

*Merrill is deep in thought.*

MERRILL

I was at this party once. I'm on a couch with Sara Mckinney. She was just sitting there, looking beautiful and staring at me. I go to lean in and kiss her and I realize I have gum in my mouth. I turn and take out the gum. Stuff it in my paper cup next to the sofa and turn around. Sara Mckinney throws up all over herself.

I knew the second it happened. It was a miracle. I could have been kissing her when she threw up. That would have scarred me for life. I may never have recovered.

*Merrill looks at the TV screen.*

MERRILL

I'm a miracle man. Those lights are a miracle.  
*Graham smiles.*

GRAHAM (whispers)

There you go.

MERRILL (whispers)

So which type are you?

GRAHAM (whispers)

Do you feel comforted?

MERRILL (whispers)

Yes.

GRAHAM (whispers)

What does it matter then?

*The two of them turn back to the silent screen of the television. It's a long beat before Graham speaks.*

GRAHAM (whispers)

Do you know what Colleen's last words were before they killed her?

*Merrill turns and stares quietly at his brother.*

GRAHAM (whispers)

She said, "See", and then her eyes glazed a bit and she said... "Tell Merrill to swing away."

*Merrill's mouth opens a bit. Graham turns and chuckles at his expression.*

GRAHAM (whispers)  
Do you know why she said that?  
Merrill nods, "No."

GRAHAM (whispers)  
Because the nerve endings in her brain were firing as she died, and some random memory of us at one of your baseball games popped into her head. There is no one watching out for us Merrill. We're all on our own.  
*Graham turns back to the television.*

- APPENDIX 2 -

***Don't let me get Me***

by Pink

Never win first place, I don't support the team  
I can't take direction, and my socks are never clean  
Teachers dated me, my parents hated me  
I was always in a fight cuz I can't do nothin' right

Everyday I fight a war against the mirror  
I can't take the person starin' back at me  
I'm a hazard to myself

Don't let me get me  
I'm my own worst enemy  
Its bad when you annoy yourself - So irritating  
Don't wanna be my friend no more  
I wanna be somebody else, I wanna be somebody else, yeah

LA told me, "You'll be a pop star,  
All you have to change is everything you are."  
Tired of being compared to damn Britney Spears  
She's so pretty, that just ain't me

Doctor, doctor won't you please prescribe somethin'  
A day in the life of someone else?  
Cuz I'm a hazard to myself

Don't let me get me  
I'm my own worst enemy  
Its bad when you annoy yourself - So irritating  
Don't wanna be my friend no more  
I wanna be somebody else

Doctor, doctor won't you please prescribe somethin'  
A day in the life of someone else?  
Don't let me get me

Don't let me get me  
I'm my own worst enemy  
Its bad when you annoy yourself - So irritating  
Don't wanna be my friend no more  
I wanna be somebody else



- APPENDIX 3 -

***Power Point Presentation Slides for Sin Talk***

The following slides are used in the Power Point presentation during the *Sin Talk*. There is a brief explanation of each slide found below.

Slide #1 – This picture of an iceberg represents what we see on the outside of people. When we merely observe someone from the “outside”, physical features, apparent personality, body language, etc., we only see a small portion of who someone really is. We only see the “tip of the iceberg.”

Slide #2 – This picture represents what is found beneath the surface. The mass majority of a human being goes way beyond what is seen.

Slide #3 - The archers are used to help define the word “sin”.

Slide #4 – The picture of the target with the arrows in the bulls-eye represents the idea of perfection. When the archers of ancient Greece failed to hit their target, it was called a “sin”.

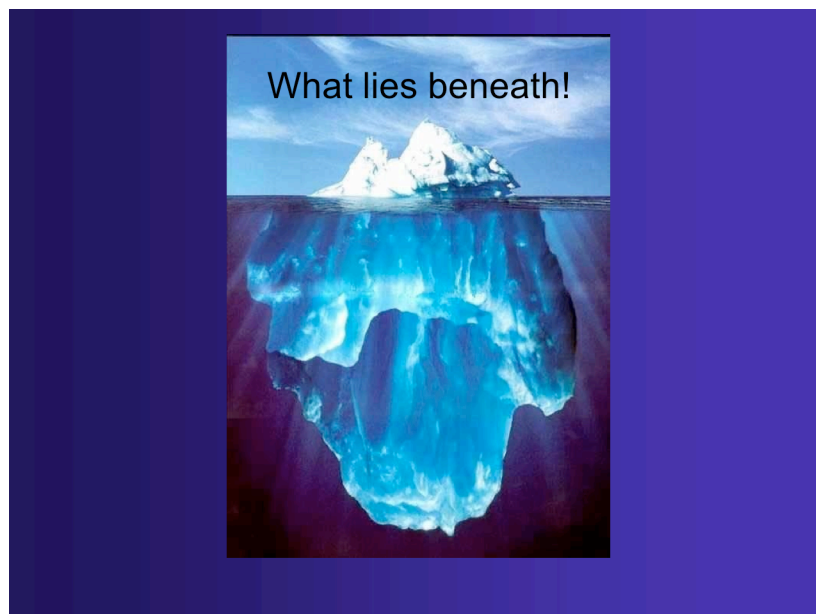
Slide #5 – This slide is actually a composite of several slides. It is used to present the idea of relativity. It is used to help teenagers compare themselves to others as they so often do. Relative to other teens, kids typically think they are better. They at least think they are better than Adolf Hitler, criminals and maybe even liars and cheaters. Few of them will claim perfection, but they will certainly claim to be better than somebody.

Slide #6 – This slide is meant shed some light on the idea of one person being better than another. It is also a composite of several slides. The primary point of this slide is to visually express the concept of sin. Everybody falls short of God’s glory and the consequence of sin is death and eternal separation from God. Nobody measures up to God’s standard of perfection, not even Mother Theresa.

## SLIDE #1



## SLIDE #2



## SLIDE #3



## SLIDE #4



## SLIDE #5

Compare yourself: Who's better than you?

The Good: Go to Heaven

The Bad: Go to Hell



Your Picture Here

Liars  
Cheaters  
Thieves

Rapists  
Murderers  
Molesters



## SLIDE #6

God's standard is perfection!

"All have fallen short"




Your Picture Here

Liars  
Cheaters  
Thieves

Rapists  
Murders  
Molesters



- APPENDIX 4 -

***Love Song***

By Third Day

I've heard it said that a man would climb a mountain  
Just to be with the one he loves  
How many times has he broken that promise  
It has never been done.  
I've never climbed the highest mountain  
But I walked the hill of Calvary

Chorus:

Just to be with you, I'd do anything  
There's no price I would not pay  
Just to be with you, I'd give anything  
I would give my life away.  
I've heard it said that a man would swim the ocean  
Just to be with the one he loves  
How many times has he broken that promise  
It can never be done  
I've never swam the deepest ocean  
But I walked upon the raging sea

Repeat chorus  
(Bridge)

I know that you don't understand  
the fullness of My love  
How I died upon the cross for your sins  
And I know that you don't realize  
how much that I gave you  
But I promise, I would do it all again.  
Just to be with you, I've done everything  
There's no price I did not pay  
Just to be with you, I gave everything  
Yes, I gave my life away.

- APPENDIX 5 -

***The Prodigal Daughter***

A modern day parable by Phillip Yancey

Philip Yancey in his book, "What's So Amazing About Grace" tells the story of a young girl who grows up on a cherry orchard just above Traverse City, Michigan. Her parents are a bit old fashioned and many times overreacted to her nose ring, the music she listened to – even the length of her skirts. She is "grounded" occasionally and she seethes inside "I hate you!" Finally, she acts on a plan she has mentally rehearsed scores of times. She runs away.

She had visited Detroit with her church youth group to watch the Tigers play. She heads to Detroit thinking that would be the last place her parents would look for her. Her second day there she meets a man who drives the biggest car she's ever seen. He offers her a ride, buys her lunch, and arranges a place for her to stay. He gives her some pills that make her feel better than she's ever felt before.

The good life continues for a month, two months, a year. The man with the big car – she calls him "Boss" – he teaches her a few things that men like. Since she's underage, men pay a premium for her. She lived in penthouse, and orders room service whenever she wants. Occasionally, she thinks about the folks back home, but their lives seem so boring and provincial.

She has a brief scare when she sees her picture printed on the back of a milk carton with the headline "Have you seen this child?" But by now she had blond hair – she looked nothing like the young girl on the carton. Anyway, this was Detroit – all her friends are runaways, nobody squeals in Detroit.

After a year the first sallow signs of illness appear. Her boss turns mean. She finds herself out on the street penniless. She turns a couple tricks a night to support her habit. Winter blew in and she found herself sleeping on metal grates outside the big department stores. Dark bands circle her eyes. Her cough worsens.

One night as she lies awake listening for footsteps, all of a sudden everything about her life looks different. She no longer feels like a woman of the world. She feels like a little girl, lost in a cold and frightening city. Something jolts her memory and a single image fills her mind of May, in Traverse City, when a million cherry trees bloom at once, with her golden retriever dashing through the rows and rows of blossomy trees in chase of a tennis ball.

“God, why did I leave,” she says to herself, and pain stabs at her heart. “My dog back home eats better than I do now.” She’s sobbing, and she knows in a flash that more than anything else in the world she wants to go home.

Three straight phone calls, three straight connects with the answering machine. She hangs up without leaving a message the first two times, but the third time she says, “Dad, Mom, it’s me. I was wondering about maybe coming home. I’m catching a bus up your way, and it’ll get there about midnight tomorrow. If you’re not there, well, I guess I’ll just stay on the bus until it hits Canada.”

The bus trip takes seven hours and during the trip she realized the flaws in her plan. What if her parents are out of town and miss the message? Her thoughts bounce back and forth between that worry and what she will say. “Dad, I’m sorry. I know I was wrong. It’s not your fault; it’s all mine. Dad, can you forgive me?” As she rehearses her throat tightens – she hasn’t apologized to anyone in years.

Finally, the bus rolls into the station, its air brakes hissing in protest, the driver announces in a crackly voice over the microphone, “Fifteen minutes, folks, that’s all we have here.” Fifteen minutes to decide her life. She checks herself in a compact mirror, smooths her hair, and licks the lipstick off her teeth. She looks at the tobacco stains on her fingertips, and wonders if her parents will notice – she wonders if they’ll even be there.

Walking into the terminal not one of the thousand scenes that have played out in her mind prepare her for what she sees. There, in the buss terminal in Traverse City, stands a group of forty brothers and sisters and great-aunts and uncles and cousins and a grandmother and great-grandmother. They’re all wearing goofy party hats and blowing noisemakers, and taped across the entire wall of the terminal is a banner that reads “Welcome Home!”

Out of the crowd of well-wishers breaks her Dad. She stares out through the tears quivering in her eyes like hot mercury and begins the memorized speech, “Dad, I’m sorry. I know. . .” He interrupts her. “Hush, child. We’ve got no time for that. No time for apologies. You’ll be late for the party.

- APPENDIX 6 -

***Small group discussion questions***

The following questions are meant for small group discussions after each club. These questions are meant as a guide only. They are not meant to be a constraint. They are to be used at the small group leader's discretion. Since there is no small group time after the last club, there are no discussion questions for this message.

***Talk #1: Take a look!***

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10 / Zacchaeus

1. Why did you come to camp?
2. What about this week are you most excited about?
3. Can you take a fresh look at this carpenter named Jesus?
4. What could stop you from at least asking if this could be real?
5. What does it mean to be real?
6. Why were you created? What is your purpose?
7. What do you believe? Is everything a coincidence, or do you believe in miracles?

***Talk #2: No strings attached!***

Scripture: Mt. 8:1-3 / Larry the Leper

1. How do you define unconditional love?
2. How does God feel about you?
3. Why did Jesus actually touch the leper?
4. When Dave said that God became a man, how did that strike you?
5. Do people you know want to be loved? How do you know?



**Talk #      *Runnin' on empty!***

Scripture: Mark 5:22-43 / Bleeding woman & Jairus' daughter

1. What does it mean to feel empty? Have you ever felt empty?
2. Have you ever tried something that just didn't work? What was it?
3. Without names, what do you see others do to make themselves feel better?
4. Describe your happiest day or moment. Do you still feel as happy about that moment? Why or why not?

**Talk #4:    *A disease called sin.***

Scripture: Romans 3:23 and 6:23 / sin, sins & consequence

1. How do you define sin?
2. What's the difference between SIN and SINS?
3. By most people's scale, from 0-10, how good are you?
4. Do you know someone who is better than you? Are you better than others?
5. Who is really guilty of sin?
6. What's the ultimate result of sin?
7. What can you do to cure this disease?

**Talk #5:    *Paid in full!***

Scripture: Various accounts from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

1. What did you think about during your time alone?
2. What most impacted you about Dave's talk tonight?
3. Was Jesus a victim or a volunteer? How does this strike you?
4. Why did Jesus have to die?
5. How does it make you feel to think that someone died in your place?
6. Which cross are you on? Remember, there is no "in the middle".

**Talk #6: *Alive and well!***

Scripture: John 20:1-8 / the empty tomb; Luke 23: 32-43 / Two criminals

1. Why is it so important that Jesus rose from the dead?
2. Have millions of people before you lost their minds? Or is this something to believe in?
3. Is Jesus a liar, lunatic or God?
4. Do you understand the ABC's?
  - a. Admit our separation.
  - b. Believe that Jesus paid our debt.
  - c. Commit to following Jesus.
5. Would you like to come home?

- APPENDIX 7 -

***New Believers Walk***

After the message on appropriation, the speaker should lead kids who have made commitments to Christ on a “New Believers Walk” at some point before they leave camp. This is designed to cover key topics that teenagers need to help them take their first steps when they get home.

***Knowing Jesus:***

The Roots of a Tree- However big the tree is, the roots are twice as big. This is a lot like the iceberg we saw the other day. There is a lot more that is unseen than is seen in our lives.

As we get to know Jesus, our roots will grow deep and we will become more like him. This is our goal. This is a life-long process and it’s a journey.

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”
- Galatians 2:20 - “Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not ‘mine,’ but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Here are a few things you need to take along with you on your journey. These are the ingredients that make your roots grow deep and strong!

(Use an illustration from camp that represents each of these concepts.)

***Fellowship:***

Use something at camp that takes more than one person to get done as an illustration for this.

How fun would the blob be if you did it alone? It would stink. It just wouldn't work. Some things can't be done alone. The Christian faith is one of those things. We need the support, encouragement and accountability of others to help us along the way.

- Find a Church
- Matthew 18:20 – “And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there.”
- Hebrew 10:24-25 – “Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.”

### ***God's Word:***

The dining hall serves three square meals a day. This provides all the nourishment you need. You can't make it long without food and it's the same way with the Word of God. This is your

Spiritual nourishment, it makes you healthy and strong. It's your guide to help you navigate through life.

- Mathew 4:4 - “Man shall not live by bread alone.”
- 2 Timothy 3:16 – “Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.”
- Joshua 1:8 – “don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get where you're going; then you'll succeed.”

### ***Ministry:***

The clubroom is a place we met every day and learned about Jesus. As YL leaders, this is a place of ministry for us. You will need to find a place like this, a place you give back to and serve. Your life will never be same once you leave this place. God has made you a new creation. As a new creation, you are also challenged to spread the word about Jesus. What will you do to spread the name of Jesus? Will you

help lead Young Life at your high school? If you're in college, will you get involved in a ministry or a bible study?

- Matthew 4:19 - "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."
- Romans 1:16 - "I am not ashamed of the Gospel."

### ***Prayer:***

In the early morning, over at my cabin, I spend some special time out on the porch. You can see it from here. It's where I see the stars, moon and sunrise up into the sky. It's a place where I pray and meditate. You'll need to find a special place and time each day to talk with God. Prayer is your mode of communication with the creator of the universe.

- John 15:7 - "But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon."
- Philippians 4:6-7 - "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. <sup>7</sup>Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

### ***Obedience to Christ***

This is your mission in life. God has called you to live according to his standard. Keep in mind that God is a God of grace and mercy. You will make mistakes and he knows it. But we need to be committed to becoming like Christ, not who we used to be. As a Christ-follower you are now royalty. You are not just designed to be a princess or knight shining armor, you are one now. You have been adopted into the family of the King. You are chosen by the King. You are called to live your life like a king's child would live.

- Romans 12:1 - "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—

and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.”

- John 14:21 - “The person who knows my commandments and keeps them, that’s who loves me. And the person who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and make myself plain to him.”

- APPENDIX 8 -

*Study on Message Preparation*

The Privilege of Proclamation

*“....through God’s mercy we have this ministry....” II Cor. 4:1*

**Introduction:** It is essential that we always remember that it is a privilege to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. Though we should communicate in a language and tone that is easily understood by others, the seriousness and depth of what we are doing should always be paramount in our own hearts and minds.

**I. Who is qualified?**

You don’t have to have a theology degree to give a good club talk. If you have a good understanding of the Gospel and a good understanding of what God has done in your own life, you can give a club talk.

**II. Be prepared!**

**Personal preparation of your heart and life:** What you say and how you say it is important, but who you are in Christ is tremendously more important. Whenever we are privileged to speak with kids, we must be 100% dependent on the Spirit of God and not the spirit of “self”. It is our responsibility to pray and study before we speak. We must allow God to speak through us, not around us.

**Consider the needs of kids:** We should be in touch with the kids involved in our clubs. It is imperative to know your audience. We should always aim at talking with our friends, not speaking to a nameless, faceless crowd. There is a big difference between a “speech” and a “talk”. It is a good idea to use illustrations that are timely and relevant to the kids in our club.

**Study the passage you will be using and let it speak to you personally:** Your own heart should be evident as you share the greatest story ever told! Let God work on you as His child. Are you aware of your own need for forgiveness, for the cross? Are you in total awe of Christ yourself? What does the crucifixion mean to you? Kids will see right through you. They will remember your heart more than your words.

### III. **Building the talk.**

**Determine your main thought:** It is essential that you have one main thought that controls your entire message. It should be simple and brief. You should state it clearly somewhere in the beginning of your talk and restate during your conclusion. What one thought do you want kids to go away with after club?

**Prepare the conclusion:** Do this as soon as you have determined your main thought. The conclusion should be the strongest part of the message. Often it is the weakest. Always end strong! This is the application of your message or the “so what”. The conclusion should be about three to five minutes.

**Prepare the body:** This is the meat of your message. Find a scripture that “explains” your main thought and tell the story, let it come alive. There is so much that goes unwritten in the scriptures that make so much of an impact if we take the time to paint the whole picture. Draw the crowd into the scene. Introduce them to all the characters. Let them hear the noises and experience the crowds. They should almost feel the pain of the crucifixion. They should become a part of the story. Finally, give them a snapshot of Jesus Christ. The body should be six to eight minutes.

**Develop an introduction:** This is your chance to get their attention. If you miss the opportunity to get their attention here, chances are it won't happen until next week. Use something that will work well with your main thought that the audience can relate to. Use a story, a personal experience, a video clip or maybe something funny one of your club kids did recently. Avoid questions that will cause a mass disturbance of multiple answers. Be creative. Humor is a great idea if your funny, if your not, just let it go. If you don't know if your funny, just ask somebody, I'm sure they will let you know! Whatever you do, make the intro quick. No more than three minutes.

**Write out your transition sentences:** One sentence ties the intro to the body and another ties the body to the conclusion. Your transitions must be smooth. Memorize them. This is a common place to fumble the ball.

**Practice. Practice. Did I say Practice?** Practice out loud to yourself and in front of others. Time yourself and get it down to under twelve minutes. Talks usually expand a little when we actually do it for real. Avoid using notes. If it is necessary, put a small note card in your Bible to refer to if needed. A club talk should never be more than fifteen minutes.



#### IV. **Be Genuine**

Remember to talk ***with*** your friends, not at them. Just be yourself and allow God to work through you. There is no greater honor than to be used by the creator of life!

- APPENDIX 9 -

*Message Worksheet*

**Text:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***Controlling Thought***

State specifically, in one short sentence, the one thought I want kids to go away with.

**Conclusion** (about 3 minutes)

Write this before the intro or body. This must be the strongest part of your message! The questions we ask for developing the conclusion are:

1. So what?
2. What is the application?
3. What are the costs and benefits of this message?
4. What am I supposed to do about what has been said?

**Introduction** (about 3 minutes)

Introduce the controlling thought. Get their attention and gather interest (using humor, personal experience, suspense, shock, story, etc.). Begin with the furthest out kid in mind.

**Body** (about 9 minutes)

This is the meat of the message: scripture and exposition. The body fleshes out the controlling thought.

**Transitional sentences**

There are only four sentences you need to memorize:

1. The first sentence of your talk (so you know when to start)
2. The last sentence of your talk (so you know when to stop)
3. The first transition sentence (between the intro and body)
4. The second transition sentence (between the body and conclusion)

## - APPENDIX 10 -

***Topics and Scriptures***

This is designed to help speakers formulate their message sequences.

Introduction/God:

God created us to be in a personal relationship with Him. We are His children and we are created in His image. He has always loved us and He has always pursued us.

Misconceptions: Cop, old man, etc.	John 10:10b	Life to the full
Every creation must have a creator.	Genesis 2:7	God created you
We are God's greatest creation.	Genesis 1:27	Made in his image
We were created for God.	Col. 1:16	His creation
God loves us more than anything.	John 3:16	He gave his son

*Incarnation:*

God, the creator of the universe, loves us so much that He gave up His Heavenly crown in exchange for an earthly crown of thorns. God became a man!

Visible expression of God.	Col. 1:15	Incarnation
God became human.	Phil 2:5-11	Incarnation
God moved into the neighborhood.	John 1:14	Incarnation
Jesus is 100% human.	Luke 2:1-20	Birth
	Mt. 1:18-25	Birth
	Luke 2:41-52	Childhood

Jesus is 100% God.	Mt. 8:23-27	Calms storm
	John 11:38	Raises Lazarus
	Luke 7:11-17	Raises child
	Mark 1:40-45	Heals leper
	John 6:5-14	Feeds 5000
	Mt. 8: 1-3	Heals leper

*The Person of Christ:*

Jesus is the physical expression of God the Father. We can know the ways of God by observing the life of Christ.

Jesus loves us unconditionally.	John 8:2-12	Adulteress
Hope for the hopeless.	Mark 5:22-34	Bleeding woman
Jesus knows everything about us.	John 4:1-18	Woman at well
Jesus knows your name.	Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus
Jesus is the great peacemaker.	Luke 22:47-52	Jesus is arrested

*A Disease Called Sin:*

All of us have a terrible disease called sin. It is destroying the world we live in today. This disease is a symptom of our rebellion against God. There is only one cure for this affliction, Jesus Christ.

We are spiritually blind.	Mt. 20:29-34	Blind beggars
Jesus is the light in a dark world.	John 8:12	Light of the world
Sin is our greatest problem.	Mark 2:1-8	Heals paralytic
All of us are guilty.	Romans 3:23	Sin
Death is our penalty.	Romans 6:23	Consequence
Hide and seek.	Genesis 3:7-13	Adam hides

*The Price is paid:*

Christ died for the sin of the world. He was willing to die because He loved us so much. We are all guilty of sin and deserve the punishment he took for us. He was an innocent volunteer. He is our perfect atonement.

The luckiest man alive!	Mark 15: 6-15	Barabbas
Christ died for our sin.	Mark 15: 16-39	Crucifixion
What is your reaction to the cross?	Mark 15: 39	Roman Centurion
Jesus conquered death!	John 20: 1-9	Resurrection
People saw Jesus alive and well.	John 20: 19-20	Visits disciples
Do you ever have doubts?	John 20: 24-31	Thomas

*Appropriation:*

The Gospel demands a response. The sacrifice that Christ made for us is a free gift. It is not something we can simply ignore. It is a gift offered to every person to accept or to reject; but it cannot be ignored.

Jesus wants a relationship.	Rev. 3:20	Jesus at the door
God can forgive anything.	Luke 15	Prodigal son
The cost of discipleship.	Luke 18:18-25	Sacrifice
You can begin a new life.	II Co. 5: 17	A new creation
Which cross are you on?	Luke 23: 39-43	Two thieves

*Life with Christ:*

Jesus has called us to follow him. This entails action. Christ followers are not meant to hide away. We are to join the battle. As God's ambassadors, we must be prepared.

Refer to the New Christian Walk for topics and scriptures.

## - APPENDIX 11 -

**Talk 1**

Title: Take a Look!

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Big Idea: Jesus knows your name!

Application: Take a fresh look at Jesus.

**I. Introduction: Flying Food**

Welcome ladies and gentleman! I hope you like having fun, because things are gonna' get crazy right now! Who's ever seen food fly!? Even better, who'd like to see some food fly right here, right now? All right boys and girls, don't try this at home. Please bring out my weapons!

*At this point, we will have some high-energy music begin. Someone will bring out a tree stump, lots of "explodable" foods and a large wooden mallet. Some great foods for exploding are: tomatoes, honeydew melons, apples, and tubs of whipped cream and best of all, pudding snack packs! We will also distribute garbage bags, a plastic tarp and shower caps to all the people on the first few rows.*

*The music should be something very recent, very fast and very loud. This should be a secular song that outreach kids would know, but the song has to meet a standard of appropriateness. Once things are all set, just start smashing food! Few things in life will ever be this therapeutic!*

**Transition:** I hope you enjoyed that as much as I did! I also hope you know we are here so that you can have the best week of your life!

**II. Preview of the week**

I want to take a few minutes to tell you about the week ahead of you. I want you to know what to expect. Let me tell you what we're all about here at Malibu.

**A. Adventure**

First, we're all about high adventure! We love living life out on the edge! And man, are you going to get some life out on the edge! You'll get to do the ropes course, the zip line, wake boarding, water-skiing the

banana boat and my personal favorite..... the blob! You're going to have the best week of your life! Several years ago I was at a camp with a bunch of my young friends. We were over at Frontier Ranch in Colorado. One morning we went out riding horses. We had a chance to run them through a meadow and we took off like lighting! While we were riding full speed I heard somebody scream my name. DAAAAAAVVVVVEEEE!!!! It was Darrin and he was riding side saddled. I mean for real side saddled. He had somehow managed to find his way to the side of the horse and it looked like he was defying gravity. He was absolutely parallel to the ground. He was screaming like crazy, "Dave! Help me!" Before I knew it, Darrin gave way to the law of gravity and hit the ground and rolled a few hundred yards! I jumped off my horse and ran over to Darrin and he was laughing his head off! Darrin had taken a risk. He'd never seen a horse, much less ridden one. Let me tell you something, Darrin had the best week of his life. I want to challenge you to take a few risks this week. Just go for it! Randy, I want you to live life this week. Leslie, I want you to laugh like you've never laughed before. Scott, I hope I send you off the blob to the moon this week. You might need to give your parents a call about that kind of road trip though. We need to get them to sign a waiver.

#### B. Relationships

Right next to adventure, we love relationships. We believe in laughing together and playing together. We believe in friendship and family. For me personally, not many things can compete with the happiness and fulfillment my family gives me. Let me take a moment to introduce you to my family. I have a few great pictures here for you.

*I will show individual shots of each of my family members and give a fifteen-second commentary on each one.*

That's my wife Kristy. She's my best friend, my partner in life, the best mom I've ever met and simply put, she's a hottie!

Now that's my daughter Audrey. She's eight years old and she's a genius. She loves math. Just like her mom.

This is Abby. Abby's the sweet tender child in the family who has a knack for drama and art. She's six years old.

There's Anna. She's the charming one with a great right hook that will take you down! She beats up boys.

And there's Drew. He's the prince and heir to my throne. Now Drew, he's mister personality AND HE'S VERY LOUD!



You'll see them around this week. They'll be running around with me while I hang out with each of you. They'll woo you over to the dark side and become fast friends with you. You'll be buying them all strawberry smoothies over at the snack bar before you know it! Besides getting to know my family, you'll be getting to know each other as well. You'll meet people from all over the country. Before the end of the week you'll all have your little black books filled! Yeah, I've seen you checking each other out! You can't get anything over on me! I am a trained professional! As you get to know each other, let me tell you where you'll grow the closest and learn the most about other people and probably yourself as well. Cabin Time! I can hear you now, *what the heck is cabin time?* Cabin time is the few minutes we'll take each day, usually after club, and have some time to talk about our day and what we heard here at club. Now, on the inside, some of you are already groaning, *No, not cabin time!* But I have to tell you, cabin time usually turns out to be everyone's best time of the week. That's the truth. Now we have few guidelines that we have to follow during our cabin times. First of all, what is said in the cabin stays in the cabin. This has to be a place of trust and honesty. You have to know that you can trust each other. Set this up from the beginning. Also, make sure that you encourage each other. Don't tear each other down or make fun of somebody. Be on the same team. Help each other. Two more things. First, don't get all silly and crazy. We want you to have fun at camp, but during cabin time we want you to be respectful of others. And finally, don't miss this time. Don't let it slip by you. Rarely do we find the time in the world we live in to do this kind of thing. Here at camp, you'll have the time. Take this chance to really get to know each other in your cabins. I challenge you go deep and to keep it real!

### C. Truth

Above all, I want you to know what we believe in here at Young Life. First of all, we believe in you. There is no place on this planet that I'd rather be than right here, right now with you. You are our inspiration and I could not be more sincere. We believe that you can change the world. We believe that you can make a difference. We believe that you are smart and bright and beautiful and we want to be around you.

We also believe in life and living it to the fullest. Life is made for embracing, not for us to squander and waste. You're not designed to sit on your butts all day in front of a TV or computer. You were designed for much, much more.

Above all else, we believe in the life-giver and his name is Jesus. I'll tell you few stories about him this week. I'll tell you how he changed my life, and I'll tell you how he changed others. But most of all, I'm going to

do my very best to help you understand that he is alive and well today. We want you to know that Jesus absolutely longs to have a relationship with each of you.

Now, some of you are thinking, *Oh no! He's one of those religious wackos! Get me outta here!* Well, I understand where you're coming from. I really do. You see, I would never say that I'm religious. I don't buy into the whole religion thing. But I do buy into Jesus and I have a real and personal relationship with him. My goal is not to sing cheesy songs with you and tell you cheesy stories. My goal is to just share life with you and ultimately tell you the truth.

Now, sometimes telling the truth is painful. But my promise to you is to keep things real and honest. I'll be vulnerable and transparent with you. I'm going to tell you stories about myself that I really don't like to tell, because I'm not proud of who I used to be. Some of the stories I'll tell you will make you laugh, but some will make you cry. But when it's all said and done, I'm going to tell you the truth. Can I have your permission to tell you the truth this week? (Typically, at this point, everyone yells in agreement.) All right then, everybody repeat after me: *Dave, you hunk of burning love. Tell us the truth Baby! And nothing but the truth!*

Well, that's exactly what you'll get. I promise. So when it stings a little bit..... no whining! Now, you'll see me all week. I'll be at meals with you and at the blob. I'll even show you a few of my moves at the volleyball pit. And I do have some moves! So when you see me, feel free to ask me any question you want. Let's talk about what's on your mind. It doesn't matter what you're thinking. I want to get to know you this week.

**Transition:** I want to challenge you to do something this week you may have never done. I want to ask you to at least take a look at this man named Jesus that I mentioned to you. Throw away all your religious ideas about him. When I was a kid, I used to think that Jesus was a skinny little guy with a really sensitive voice. I thought he was weak and quiet. I thought he had nothing to offer me. Even more so, I never considered the fact that he was real and that he was in the business of changing lives. But one day, I was in a place like this and I took a fresh look at Jesus. My life hasn't been the same since. Let me tell you a story about another person who did the same thing. His name is Zacchaeus.

### **III. Luke 19:1-10 / Zacchaeus**

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not,*

*because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

*When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.*

*All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner’”.*

*But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “ Look, Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”*

*Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.” (New International Version)*

A. Zacchaeus took a risk. (verses 1-4)

Zacchaeus took a big risk here. He was wealthy and despised by his peers. He was a tax collector and had power. As a tax collector he was a low life cheat in the eyes of his neighbors. You see, tax collectors were actually Jewish citizens working for the Roman government: the enemy! Not only did he work for the enemy, but it was well known that tax collectors made themselves rich by taking more taxes from the people than was actually required. Tax collectors then were a lot like a crooked cop today. To say the least, he was not a popular guy and it probably wouldn't help his status to go acting like a little kid and start pushing through crowds and climbing trees. This was looked at as very undignified and very inappropriate. But Zacchaeus didn't care. He had to take a look at Jesus. Somehow, someway, he knew there was something different about Jesus. Whatever moved Zacchaeus, it was enough to embarrass him self in front of the whole town.

B. Jesus knew his name. (verses 5, 6)

I think at that point, when Zacchaeus was hanging on a tree limb, he just thought Jesus was more like a rock star or famous athlete. You know, if Bono were walking around your school lunchroom just hanging out, everybody would go crazy to catch a look at him. Zacchaeus knew that Jesus was different, but he had no idea! You see, Jesus was a lot more than a rock star or and athlete. Jesus was the man! I mean the man! And when Jesus walked by the tree where Zacchaeus was holding on for dear life, not caring what anybody thought, he looked up and spoke to Zacchaeus, calling out his name. Did you catch that? He knew

Zacchaeus' name! Now if Bono or Michael Vick or Brad Pitt were walking through your school and just said, "Hey Nick! Hey Elise! Let's get together for dinner tonight at your place!" Would that grab your attention or what? That's what happened to Zacchaeus, but on a much bigger scale!

C. Jesus dines with a sinner. (verse 7)

Let me tell you why Jesus was so different. Jesus didn't care about religion. He didn't care about all the rules and regulations. He didn't care what others thought about him. All he cared about was people, especially people that no one else cared about. He cared about the lonely. He cared about the sad and broken hearted. He cared about the crooked cop and the drug dealers and drug users. He cared about the hungry and the sick. He cared about the confused and the lost. He cared about an old tax collector like Zacchaeus and I'm here to tell you right now, that he cares about you. Man, let me tell you something. When Jesus yelled up into that tree and invited himself to dinner, the gossip began. *What in the world! Is he really going to Zacchaeus' house? He's hanging out with people like him? Sinners? Well, I guess Jesus isn't quite the religious man I thought he was!* Exactly! There's nothing religious about Jesus.

D. Zacchaeus' life was changed. (verses 8, 9)

Ohhhh man! When you meet Jesus face to face and you really get a good look at him, your life is never the same. It can't be. And when Zacchaeus met Jesus the first time, his life was changed forever. Jesus changed him from the inside out. He had no desire to take people's money anymore. In fact, he decided to give it all back and then some. This man saw something in Jesus. Something special. Something worth living for.

E. Jesus seeks us out. (verse 10)

When Jesus uses the term "Son of Man", he is referring to himself. And Jesus makes it clear why he came to planet earth. He came looking for us. He came looking for you and me. Jesus seeks us out and longs to be in a relationship with us. And to top it all off, he knows your name! You'll find out later this week that even though you may not know him, he knows you. He knows everything about you. Not just your name. Everything.

**IV. Application: Take a look.**

So what does this mean for you? Well, I think this man named Jesus is worth taking a look at. Would you be willing to take a fresh look

at Jesus with me this week? I promise I am not here to make you do anything. But I do want you to be able to make an informed and educated decision about something that could be the most powerful and meaningful decision of your life.

Your life could be changed just like Zacchaeus' life. Zacchaeus took risk. He took a look at Jesus and his life was never the same again. I know that right now in this room, a lot of you are wondering why you are here today? You're wondering why you even exist. *What's my purpose in life? Why I am here? Why do I exist? Why do I want to have meaning so badly? Does anybody, anybody really want to know me?* Take a look at Jesus and I think you may find the answer to your questions.

## **V. So, what do you believe?**

### **A. Signs video clip.**

I think this week will be a great opportunity for you to examine what you really believe. Let me show you a little clip from a movie that you may have seen. It's called *Signs* and it stars Mel Gibson. In this scene his brother is asking that very question. What do you believe? Do you believe in Miracles? Let's take a look.

(Please see the appendix for the manuscript to this scene.)

### **B. Accident or coincidence?**

So, what do you believe? Do you believe in miracles? Do you believe in God? Or is it all an accident? What do you believe?

### **C. My goal for the week.**

Let me tell you my goal for the week. It's very simple. When camp is over and you head out for home, you will know exactly where you stand in reference to Jesus Christ. You may know that you don't want anything to do with him, but you'll know where you stand. It will be very clear. Remember, no matter what you believe, no matter what you think; you are welcome here in this place. It's built for you! This is your place. Not mine. Not your leader's. It's all yours this week. It is our deepest desire for you to feel loved and cared for no matter who you are. If you ever wanted to feel popular, you came to the right place. Because you are down right famous here!

## **Talk 2**

Topic:	Person of Christ
Title:	No Strings Attached
Big Idea:	God's love is unconditional.
Application:	We are designed for a relationship with God.

### **I. Introduction: The Pizza story**

Anybody here love pizza?!! Nearly everybody loves to eat pizza! It's practically un-American to not like pizza! Let me tell you about one of the most amazing pizzas I ever ate. Several years ago, Kristy, my wife, and I went to the grocery store and they had one of those places where you can have a pizza made for you and you take it home and cook it yourself. So I got myself this awesome pepperoni pizza and I took it home and I popped in the oven and I patiently waited for the ring of the oven bell. Soon I had devoured the whole thing. It was incredible. I mean it hit the spot. And when I say it hit the spot.... I mean it really hit the spot. At about 2 A.M. I received the ten-second alert. Do you know about the ten-second alert? I periodically get these alerts. It's usually more like the two-minute alert or the one-minute alert. But rarely do I ever get the ten-second alert. Here's the deal, I was rudely awakened in my sleep by a serious rumble in my tumbly. I knew instantly that I had no more than ten seconds to get to the bathroom or we were going to have a serious explosion of epic proportions. Well, I immediately threw the covers away and dashed to the toilet. Unfortunately, it took me eleven seconds instead of ten or less. Let me tell you, this was a bad scene. I mean there was partial pepperoni everywhere. It was almost like modern art in our bathroom. I swear I saw a couple of pepperoni smiley faces plastered to wall! I had thrown up everything I had and more! After this experience, I was exhausted. There was no way I could clean up the mess I made. So, I slowly crawled back to the bedroom and pulled myself on to the bed and begged my wife for help. Now, this woman can sleep through an atomic explosion, so it took some effort to get her attention. Finally, she woke up and went into the bathroom and cleaned up everything. She also took all the nasty towels and clothes and went into the basement and washed them. You want to hear something amazing? She was glad to do it. She never complained. Why in the world would my wife do such a thing with such a great attitude?

**Transition:** Because she loves me! I mean she **really** loves me a lot. Come on now! Look at me! How could she not!? In moments like that, surrounded by pepperoni, I think she may love me unconditionally.

**Define unconditional love:** Let's take a look at what in the world unconditional love really means. You see, God, the creator of the universe, has a lot to say about this topic.

A. I Corinthians 13:4-8

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (New International Version)(If a video projector and screen are available, it is a good idea to flash this verse on the screen line by line as it is spoken. It has a powerful visual impact.)*

These verses describe all that unconditional love should be. This is the best "how to love unconditionally" list I could ever come up with.

B. No strings attached

Let me put it another way for you. Unconditional love means there are no strings attached. Do you know what I'm saying here? Unconditional love means loving someone no matter what. No matter what that person said or did. There are no strings attached. There is no "I'll love you if ....." Instead, it's an "I'll love you no matter what!" That's unconditional love. This is the kind of love that everybody wants. This is the kind of love that everybody dreams about!

C. God's unconditional love

Where in the world can you find that kind of love? I'm talking about the absolute perfect love. There's only one place where you find this kind of love and it's through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Now don't get me wrong. My wife loves me. And for the most part it's unconditional. However, we have a bad day every now and then. You see, her love for me will never be as perfect as God's love for me. And I want you to know that this kind of love is a gift that God wants to give to you, with no strings attached.

D. The depth of God's love:

A lot of my friends in the past have asked, "If God is so real, then why doesn't he show himself? How could he ever understand me and my problems? What does he know about life?" Many of you probably have the same questions and more. Let's look at these questions for a minute. This may surprise you, but God, did in fact show himself to the world. Two thousand years ago, he invaded planet earth. He put into action the

greatest rescue ever known to man. He lowered himself and put all his rights and privileges and comforts aside. Heaven and Earth collided when God became a human being, flesh and blood in the form of a baby named Jesus. God became one of us. The very creator of the universe became the created. He had to learn how to walk. He wore a diaper. He felt hunger and heartache. He experienced exhaustion and most of all, he experienced pain. God had become a man and he walked among us so that we could know him. Now get ready for a curve ball here. Even though Jesus was 100% human, he was also 100% God. He could walk on water and make the blind see again. He even made the dead alive again. So what does God know about life? Well, not only did he create life, he lived it! And let me tell you something huge, gigantic. God invaded our world because of you and if you want to know who God is, just look at Jesus. He is the visible expression of the invisible God. When you see Jesus, you see God. And Jesus loves you unconditionally. Let me give you a snapshot of Jesus in action.

## **II. A snapshot of unconditional love – Matthew 8:1-3**

*When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. (New International Version)*

### **A. Larry the Leper**

Let’s go back 2000 years. In your mind, imagine yourself on large hill staring down on a crowd by the shore of a lake. Standing next to you on this hill is a man like none you have ever met. His skin is decayed and rotten. He stinks and he’s terribly deformed. He is distressed and confused and though you are disgusted by him, your heart is filled with sympathy. Let me introduce you to Larry. Larry has one of the most feared and hated diseases of all time. Larry has leprosy.

### **B. Define leprosy**

- i) It destroys the nerve endings in your body.
- ii) It prevents you from feeling pain.
- iii) Without pain you will have serious injuries.
- iv) Because of the infection, your body literally begins to rot away.
- v) Leprosy was thought to be highly contagious.

### **C. Leprosy 2000 years ago**

- i) Lepers were segregated from society.



- ii) Lepers could not come in contact with healthy people.
- iii) Lepers had to announce themselves within a hundred feet.
- vi) Lepers were humiliated, lonely and unloved.

#### D. Larry's only hope – Jesus

Larry longs to find help. He knows that his days are numbered. Until now, he's never known hope of any kind. As he looks down at the crowd, he knows that Jesus can fix all his problems. Jesus can take the leprosy away. But if he reaches out to Jesus for help, he will have to face the shame of the crowd. And he thinks to himself - *They'll all hate me. They'll stone me and kill me. But if I don't try, I'll rot away and die!* Do you ever experience this when you walk into your school? When you're walking down the hallways, do you wonder what people are thinking? Do you ever break out in a sweat when certain people walk by? Or do you feel rejected at certain tables in the lunchroom? If you ever felt any of these things, then you have an idea of how Larry's feeling at this point. Until, finally, with sweat beading down his scarred face, Larry slowly moves down the hill towards the crowd. And he yells out, "Leper coming through. Stand back! Leper coming through!" At that instant, a miracle happened. The crowd split apart and backed away. They left a wide passage for Larry to walk through as he approached Jesus. Every single person was aghast at Larry, every person but one, Jesus. Jesus did not back away.

#### E. Larry's humility – He knelt before Jesus

As Larry approached Jesus, he knelt before him and said a few simple, but powerful words, "Master, if you are willing, you can make me clean." And at that moment, to everyone's shock and amazement, Jesus reached out and touched him and said, "Oh, I am willing. Be healed." Instantly, Larry was a new creation. He was healed. The leprosy was gone. Jesus 100% God!

#### F. The reaction of Jesus

Did you just hear what Jesus just did? He touched Larry, the man infected with leprosy. When no one else would even come near him, Jesus touched him. Holy cow! He could have done this from the other side of the planet, but no, Jesus did it with a touch! Jesus is also 100% man. He understands pain and suffering. He understands the power of a simple touch. Jesus wants to be near us!

### G. The reaction of the crowd – shock, wonder and fear

Can you imagine the crowd around them? Some of them screamed with anxiety, “Jesus! Don’t touch him! He’s a leper! You’ll die!” Others who hated him were hopeful of just that. While others, who were just curious about this Jesus character, stood there with mouths wide open in pure shock! Why would Jesus touch a leper like this? The very person everyone hated to be around... the very person everyone hated... Jesus loved. In fact he loved him unconditionally. It didn’t matter what Larry looked like. It didn’t matter what he smelled like. It didn’t matter how many times he tried something other than Jesus. All that mattered was that Larry asked Jesus for help. And he got it, no strings attached. No questions asked. Larry literally became a new creation. You know, Larry was created for that very moment. He was created to be touched by Jesus in a way that would change his life forever. You and I are created the same way. Now, you may not know it, but we have a case of leprosy that is far worse than Larry’s. Our disease is invisible most often because it’s found on the inside. But no matter what we’ve done and no matter when we did it, Jesus longs to love each of us unconditionally. He longs to reach out and touch your heart and make you brand new, bright and shining!

### III. **Conclusion**

**Application:** So what?! What does this all really mean for you personally? Whether you believe it or not... I know it’s true. God loves you unconditionally, with no strings attached. It doesn’t matter what you did last year, last month, last week, last night or in the last minute. God loves you no matter what you’ve done and no matter who you are. You can’t imagine something bad enough that God couldn’t forgive it. Nothing you could do could ever make him stop loving you. He longs to be in a relationship with you. You are his dream come true! Please hear this. Because, Jesus was 100% human, he understands you. Because he is 100% God he has the power to change your life forever. He can give you hope and love like you have never imagined. Will all your problems go away? No. Will you experience peace and joy? Yes! Absolutely. Because of Jesus, you will be able to face life and live life like never before. Jesus is powerful. He is wise and he is compassionate. He controlled the wind and the waves. He healed the sick. He raised people from the dead and he walked on the water. This is the God who loves you unconditionally, just the way you are.

Love has a name and its name is Jesus.

*Use the power point presentation here. Each of the following lines will appear on a screen on the stage behind the speaker as each line is spoken.*

He is patient. He is kind. He is slow to anger and he keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus never fails.

**Illustration – What could make me stop loving you?**

As my children have gotten older, I've asked each of them this question, "What could you do to make me stop loving you?" And they try their hardest to guess the answer.

"Hit Anna?" No.

"Yell at Mommy?" No.

"Tell a lie?" No.

"Call somebody a bad name?" No.

"Poke my tongue out at you?" No.

"Put the dog in the microwave?" No. And after several guesses each of them ask, "What Daddy, what?" And my answer is this, "There is nothing you could ever do that would make me stop loving you. You are my little girl, my little boy forever." And that is exactly how God feels about you. No matter what you think, there is nothing you can do that will make him stop loving you. He's made his choice and he chooses you! Can you do me a favor tonight? I want you to ask yourself a question. Here it is," What would it feel like to know there is a God who created me and loves me unconditionally?" Here's the bottom line. You are made by God to be in a relationship with God. You are designed to love and be loved. What can you do to make God stop loving you? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

### **Talk 3**

Topic:	Need of Mankind
Title:	Runnin' on Empty!
Big Idea:	Only Jesus will meet your needs. Everything else will leave you empty.
Application:	Ask yourself, is it possible that only Jesus can truly fulfill me?

#### **I. Introduction: The dead end street**

When I was sixteen, I had the sweetest ride in town. A 1981, black Chevy step-side, chrome rocket wheels, chrome tube grill, chrome roll bar, chrome rails, four barrel 305, dual exhausts and she was beautiful! And most importantly, she was mine! Man, when I went through the drive through at Mickey D's I always got the girls number at the register. That truck made me irresistible! I know you have no problem imagining this, but I truly was a hunk-of-burning-love! One night I was out cruisin' in my truck and I ran across my friend, Michael Porter. Now he was out in his ugly old blue fleet side 72' Ford piece of junk of a truck. He did not get the girl's number at Mickey D's when he went through the drive through. But he did think his truck was fast and he challenged me to a race. Being the non-competitive guy I am, I considered this for a nano-second and said, "Bring it on!! We got up beside each other on an old deserted road and the next thing I knew, we were flying! 40. 50. 60. 80. All I saw was Michael Porter disappearing in my rearview mirror! He was just a little bitty speck of nothing! Then it happened. The road ended. It was a dead end street and I didn't even know it! I had no time to react. I ran full speed over a huge pile of dirt. I ramped over a barbed wire fence. I flew through the air. I was a real "Duke of Hazard". I landed in a field and dodged 7 cows, 4 horses, two pigs and one armadillo! It was scary! Luckily, I wasn't injured. Neither were the cows, horses, pigs or the armadillo! But I have to tell you something very important. That race was a perfect reflection of my life. I was headed down a dead end street, full speed ahead and I didn't even know it. But this race would not find me uninjured and invincible. I was the one becoming a speck of nothing. It would find me dead if something didn't happen.

#### **II. Testimony**

You see, I spent years doing things my way. I was concerned about one person and one person only. Me! I was all that mattered. I thought beating the snot out of somebody was a good way to solve problems. At

one point I found myself standing on top of someone's car at an intersection jumping up and down and screaming at the guy to get out so I could beat the pulp out of him. The whole time this guy was crying his eyes out and everybody was looking at me as the light changed colors three times. But I didn't care. I didn't care what anybody thought. All I cared about was me.

During my high school and college days I was a real jerk. I was self-centered, violent and promiscuous. I was sexually addicted and I was into pornography. And this meant that I treated girls in the worst way. Now, I had the definite gift of gab and I always knew what to say. Unfortunately, I rarely had good intentions and my motives never matched my words.

One evening I got into a fight with my roommate in college. I had him pinned up against the wall and he threatened to call the police if I hit him. Later we attempted to patch things up and he told me that I was a jerk and all his friends thought I was a jerk. He was really just trying to get through to me and help me see myself. My response to him was a simple and very sincere, "So what? I don't care." And that was my life in a nutshell. I didn't care. I didn't care about you. I didn't care about my girlfriend. I didn't care about friends. I just didn't care about anything but me.

Gentlemen, let me tell you something. I know what it's like to think the thoughts you think. I know what it's like to act cool on the outside but feel beat up on the inside. I know what it's like to wish you had another mom or a dad or just somebody who would listen. I know what it's like to have terrifying questions like, "Oh no. Is my girlfriend pregnant?"

Ladies, I understand the feelings you experience. I understand that you need someone who will care about you for who you really are. I understand that you want to feel a sense of security. I understand that many of you wish you had a dad that would just take a few moments to really love you. I understand that the temptation to give yourselves away in exchange for a few moments of affection is often far too great to resist.

I really do understand. I walked in your shoes and I need you to know that there are answers to your questions. We live in a broken world filled with pain. You don't need a PhD in sociology to figure this out! The truth of the matter is this: We have a great need for purpose and fulfillment. We will go to almost any length to find this in our lives. It's our greatest need. Purpose and fulfillment. We crave it. We long for it. And unfortunately, we're trying to find it in all the wrong places and we

keep coming out feeling empty and meaningless. But there can be an end to your quest. There is an answer.

### **III. Jesus, Jairus and the Bleeding woman - Mark 5:21-43**

*When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed against him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of a great many doctors and spent all she had, yet instead of getting better, she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against", his disciples answered, "and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." He did not let anyone follow him except for Peter, James and John, the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep." But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (She was twelve years old.) At this they were completely astonished. (NIV)*

**Transition:** Let me introduce you to a couple of characters from the past who also found themselves in need. These two couldn't be more different. One is a man and one is a woman. One is wealthy and one is poor. One is well respected and the other is shunned by society. One has been looking for help in all the wrong places and the other hasn't needed any help at all until now. But both of them turned to the same person during their most desperate time.

A. The plea of a desperate father. V. 21-24

i) A man in great need.

With absolute abandon, Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus! Let me tell you a few things about Jairus. Jairus was a well-known figure with a title and authority. In other words, he was the man! He didn't need anything from anybody. In your school he would be the football captain with the straight A's and the best clothes. What in the world does a guy like this need? Well, it seems that fame and fortune doesn't solve all your problems. Jairus' coming to Jesus would have certainly put his reputation at risk, but his desperate need was more than he could bear. His daughter was dying and there was nothing he could do. So he turned to Jesus. He believed in Christ when his peers would not.

ii) Illustration: I was in great need.

When my daughter, Audrey, was seven days old, my wife had to take her to the hospital. She was so sick that they had to put an IV in her forehead and tubes up her nose. The doctor said that she might suffer brain damage if she got any worse. I rushed onto the children's floor and into the room. I discovered her with tubes and wires connected to her little body. She was still and silent. We were desperate. At that moment, I understood how Jairus must have felt.

B. The faith of a desperate woman. V. 25-34

i) A woman in great need.

We don't know her name. We don't know her address. We don't now how old she is. But we do know that she's been suffering for twelve long years. During these years she has suffered the pain of non-stop bleeding. Yes, it's probably exactly what you think it is. I can tell by the look on your faces that this is a little disturbing, especially for the women in the room. But there's more to her suffering than the bleeding. You see, every time a woman went through this ordeal, she was considered unclean and could not show herself in public. Fortunately, this is typically only for a few days. But for this woman it was every day for twelve years! Because of her condition, she had seen an endless stream of doctors and they had all failed her. In fact, she only got worse! Not to mention they took all her money! This woman was at the end of her rope. She had hit rock bottom. She had tried everything and it all failed her..... except for Jesus. Is this a story you can relate with? Have you ever hit rock bottom and felt hopeless? Do you ever wake up in the morning and wonder if you can make it just one more day? If so, then you know how this woman felt. She had one last ditch effort. Her last

chance. Her last hope. She turned to a carpenter, a miracle-worker from Nazareth named Jesus.

ii) The power of believing.

After she had lost everything, after everyone had failed her, after looking in all the wrong places, she finally looked to Jesus for help. She believed that he could meet her need. And by believing, she took action. She reached out and merely touched the robe of Jesus and she was fixed. The bleeding stopped. She was whole again. Her life had become her own once more. No more hiding away. No more fearing those who tormented her. No more doctors. No more failures! Who wants a dose of this medicine? Man, I do! But the story only gets better from here. You see, having her body healed wasn't even close to the best thing that happened to her. She was also spiritually healed. Jesus found her in the crowd and sat with her. And the book tells us that Jesus listened to her whole story. Jesus cared about more than her physical body. He cared about her. Ohhh, and I have to tell you. He cares about you. Don't you want someone to listen to you for once in your life? Don't you want someone who cares about you for who you really are? If you do, Jesus is your man. Let's watch him in action one more time.

C. Do not fear. v. 35-42

Which voice do you listen to?

Now, while Jesus is hanging out with this woman in the crowded street, what else is going on? That's right. Jairus has been waiting the entire time! His daughter is dying and Jesus is listening to this woman's life story! Then Jairus' whole world crumbles. Jairus finds out his daughter is dead. She's gone! Then his friends tell him to stop bothering Jesus, the teacher. You see, they don't know who Jesus is! They think he's just another man. Friendly, yes, but he's still just another man. But just like we found out last night, Jesus is definitely a man, but he's also God in the flesh. When Jesus overheard Jairus' friends, he told him, "Don't be afraid. Just believe." Now Jairus is in a tough spot. In one ear his friends are telling him there's no hope. In the other ear, Jesus is telling him to just believe. What should Jairus do? What do you do in this situation? I think you can really relate to our friend Jairus here. Every day different voices are whispering in your ear telling you to do this or do that. But I believe there is always this little, faint voice in the back of your head that tells you the truth. So often we listen to the voices that lie to us. Why? What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of what people will think? Are we afraid of changing? Are we afraid of giving up our life style? Jairus had everything to lose by listening to Jesus. But he also had everything to gain.



D. Jesus gives real life.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, people were weeping and wailing over the death of Jairus' daughter. Jesus told them that she was really just asleep and they all laughed at him. Again, they had no idea who this guy was. Jesus went into the room where the little girl lay and he astonished everybody. He told her, "Little girl, get up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and jumped up off the bed. While everyone else laughed at Jesus, Jairus believed!

Would you have laughed at Jesus or would you have believed? Most people laughed. I think in the short run, it just seems easier to laugh than commit to something so radical, yet so wonderful. What do you do today? Do you laugh at this guy named Jesus or do you think there may be something to this? You have to know that Jairus daughter wasn't the only one who came back to life that day. I believe Jairus came back to life as well. When you have an encounter with Jesus that's personal and intimate, you can't ever be the same again. Let me make you a promise about this week. Some of you will come back to life just like Jairus. You won't be able to keep from it. Because you will discover that I'm telling you the truth. And you will have a personal and intimate encounter with Jesus. Some of you think I'm crazy, but I don't care. Just wait and see!

**IV. Application:** So what?

What in the world do these stories mean to you? How can someone who lived 2000 years ago have any impact on your life today? Those are great questions. And I think we have some great answers. First, I believe that Jesus is still alive today. Second, Jesus is the only one who will ever give you complete fulfillment and purpose. Only he can truly meet your greatest need.

Everything else will leave you empty and hollow. But, just like the bleeding woman, we want to try everything else. And when everything else fails, we just try it all again. Am I right? Have you seen people who fit this description? Maybe, just maybe, you've heard that quiet, persistent voice in the back of your head and decided to listen to the other voices whispering in your ear.

**V. Looking in all the wrong places.**

A. A God shaped hole in our hearts

Blaise Pascal, the inventor of calculus, said that every person in the world has a God shaped hole in his or her heart. Blaise Pascal was much

more than a mathematician. His life went beyond numbers and formulas. He had great insight into the heart of human beings. He knew what makes us tick. Every person has an empty space in his or her heart that can only be filled with God. That's why it's God shaped. The trick thing about this God shaped vacuum is that it must be filled or it leaves us empty and hollow. Unfulfilled and unsatisfied. This emptiness will not be denied. It can't be denied. And only one thing will ever fill this space... God. Yet, so often we spend our lives trying to fill this God shaped hole with everything but God.

### B. Glove Illustration

Let me use this glove as an illustration to help us "see" what I'm talking about. A glove has a hand shaped hole – without a hand it is useless. It's lifeless. But once we put our hand inside of it, suddenly it takes shape and life. It becomes everything it was meant to be. That's the way the human heart is designed by God. It has an empty space; a vacuum that is shaped exactly like God and nothing else will fit there. The interesting thing about this God shaped vacuum is this; it longs to be filled. That space cannot stay empty. It's the spot that gives us fulfillment, purpose, life and love. We can never experience real life without this space being filled and only God can fill it. However, we do our very best to fill this space with everything but God. And just like this glove, nothing fits. Let me show you what I mean.

*I will use a rubber dishwashing glove for this illustration. I will use physical items to put into the glove to demonstrate my point. These items will represent the list below.*

This glove is designed to fit over a person's hand. Just like our heart is designed for God. But just like this glove, we will fill that empty space with things that just don't fit. Things like:

- |            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| ➤ Drugs    | ➤ Sex         |
| ➤ Money    | ➤ Performance |
| ➤ Looks    | ➤ Alcohol     |
| ➤ Religion | ➤ Friends     |

## **VI. We are designed for a relationship with Christ.**

### A. Created for God – Col. 1:15,16

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in Heaven and on earth, visible*

*and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*

These words tell us why none of that stuff would fit into that glove or fit into our hearts. It's very simple. We were created by God and created for God. You're wired to be in a relationship with Jesus!

#### B. Corvette Illustration

Just like the glove is useless without a hand; we have no purpose without a relationship with God. It's just the truth. It really is. Let me show you what I mean from a different angle. Somebody yell out your favorite car. I need a sweet ride for this wacky story. All right, a convertible 65' corvette stingray, now that is a sweet ride! Let's just imagine that I'm driving through the neighborhood with my fully restored cherry convertible 65' corvette stingray. And I pull up into my driveway and I polish her up and you and I sit there and stare at our reflections in the paint job. Then it gets crazy. I go into the garage and I come out with some gardening soil and I dump the ten-pound bag right into the car's interior. Then I do it again and again and again until it is filled all the way to the top of the doors. You look at me like I've lost my mind. Then I go back into the garage and I bring out some daisies and roses and gardenias and a couple of sunflowers and I start planting them. You look at me and say, "Yo man, have you lost your mind or what?! This is a convertible 65' corvette stingray. She's made to cruise downtown and fly on the highway! What on earth are you doing?" Then I look at you and say, "Oh no, this baby right here, she's made for growing flowers. She's the best looking flower pot on the block!"

Now, is something wrong with this? Oh yeah! You better believe it. This is a vintage corvette. This is not a flowerpot! It's not designed to be a flowerpot! It's designed for speed and wind in my hair! And you and I are designed for a relationship with God and life and purpose and meaning. Just like this glove is designed for my hand, you are designed to be in a relationship with Jesus. As a matter of fact, you are created for God. Let me read these few lines to you. (Read Colossians 1:15,16) I hope you heard that! You are created by God and created for God. This is the only place you'll ever find complete fulfillment.

### **VII. Jesus is the life giver.**

#### A. Jesus is the only source of life.

Jesus literally gives us life! We can't find it anywhere else. Jesus is life. Not only does he give us life, he gives life to the full. He gives it to the absolute maximum! But here's the bad news. Without Jesus, we have no

life at all. You may think you do, but you don't. A lot of you know that I'm making sense. You've often wondered, "Why can't I find peace? Why can't I find fulfillment? Why is everything that makes me happy so temporary?" Here's the answer: You haven't experienced life yet, because you haven't experienced Jesus.

#### B. Illustration: Sixth Sense

Some of you may have seen a popular Bruce Willis movie from a few years back, *the Sixth Sense*. Yeah, I thought so. You guys love those spooky movies. I had no idea that this was a spooky movie and man, this thing messed me up! I'm still having nightmares over that thing. Instead of my kids waking me up in the middle of the night, I wake them up! Well, there's one special line in that movie that really connects to what we're looking at here. The little boy looks at Bruce Willis and he says, "I see dead people, but they don't know that they're dead."

Those few words reflect the world we live in today. I see dead people, but they don't they're dead. So many of us are dead and we don't even know it! I know, I know. Yeah, you have flesh and bones and blood and hands and feet and your heart is pumping and all that stuff. But I'm talking about real life, the life that everybody is looking for in all the wrong places. I know that most of you know what I'm talking about. You're smart people. You have more information given to you than any generation in the history of man. And despite all this good information, we can't find the good life. Everything seems to fail. Our stuff just doesn't work. Let me show you what I mean.

*The following statistics will come up on a big screen as I mention each one. This helps to emphasize the point.*

- Over 70% of HS seniors experiment with drugs.
- Over 3 million teenage alcoholics.
- Every day in America 13 teenagers commit suicide.
- In the last 20 years the rate of suicide has tripled for ages 16-18.
- 1 of 7 teenage girls becomes pregnant.
- 1000 teenage girls become pregnant every day.
- At this point over 30 million abortions have occurred in America.

### **VIII. Application - Perception**

#### A. Self perception – Don't let me get Me by Pink

We tend to have a lousy view of ourselves. After seeing the figures I just ran by you, we can see why. Things aren't going so well out there friends. Oh, we do a great job at hiding it, but we often feel worthless, inadequate, unimportant and lonely. Listen to this song and see if any of you can relate.

*For the sake of time and impact, only a portion of the song should be played. The initial 54 seconds of this song is ideal.*

*The complete lyrics are found in the appendix.*

A lot of people feel just like this. "I'm my own worst enemy! Don't let me get me." Maybe... Just maybe, some of you feel like this. You don't like what you see in the mirror. You don't like who you are. You don't feel valuable. In fact you feel worthless. If this is anywhere close to how you feel, listen to me now. Please hear me when I say this. Sssssshhhhhh.... (In a low voice) can you hear me? It's all a lie! You are valuable! You are important! Let me tell you how the King of all creation feels about you!

#### B. God's perception

You are royalty. God sees you as the crown jewel of his kingdom. In his eyes, it doesn't get any better than you. You really, truly are royalty.

##### i) The princess – Directed to the young women

Ladies, I need you to listen to me now. I'm talking to you. You see, in the eyes of God, you are a princess. This is no joke. This is serious business. You were made to be a princess. Beautiful. Royal. Majestic. You are valuable to Him and he longs for you to be in a relationship with him. But you need to hear one more thing. If you want to be a princess, you need to act like a princess. How do you talk? How do you dress? How do you act around young men? Where do you spend your time? Please believe me when I tell you this. You are designed to be a princess. No less! Do the guy's you go out with honor you and treat you like a princess? If not, cut them loose now! You have to know that God sees you as beautiful and lovely and longs for you to know him.

##### ii) A knight in shining armor – Directed to the men

All right gentlemen, it's your turn now. I'm about to say something that I hope you will never forget. God has designed you to be a knight in shining armor. You're no measly squire or a lousy jester. No sir! You are the man, a knight in shining armor! God has designed you to be men of courage, honor and integrity. Men of valor! He has made you for

greatness! But only through a relationship with Jesus will you ever be what you are designed to be. Gentlemen, if you want to be a knight, you have to act like a knight. Let me tell you what a true knight acts like. He honors women by respecting them and protecting their purity. He defends those who can't defend themselves. A knight stands for what is right, no matter how hard it is or how painful the outcome. A knight can be trusted because he has integrity and character of the highest caliber. He's the guy you want on your team when the battle is on. Gentlemen, does this describe you? If not, why not? It should. This is what you're made for. This is your purpose. This is your design. But it will never happen apart from Jesus.

## **IX. Conclusion**

All right guys, here's the bottom line. The world we live in is all screwed up. It's broken. A lot of you have been dealt some pretty rotten hands and I know life stinks sometimes. Sadly, just as the world around us is broken, so are we. We are desperate for purpose and meaning. The brokenness of the world around us just makes our search that much more difficult. I know it does and I know it doesn't seem fair, but that's what we've got. But I hope that tonight you heard a little good news. There is an answer. Just like Jairus and just like the bleeding woman, if you look in the right place, you'll find it. His name is Jesus and he loves you more than you can imagine. And he wants to give you meaning and purpose.

## Talk 4

Topic:	Sin
Title:	A Disease called Sin
Big Idea:	Everybody has been infected with a disease called sin.
Application:	Because of our sin, our relationship with God is broken and the consequence is death.

### I. Introduction: Audrey stuck in the toy box.

When my oldest daughter, Audrey, was about eighteen months old, she was learning how to talk. Unfortunately, she was having some serious pronoun issues! Whenever she was in trouble she would cry for help by saying, “Help you! Help you! Help you!” As you can imagine it was a little confusing in the beginning when she would find herself trapped in the toilet or mashed under a pile of cushions. I kept thinking she wanted to help me! The problem was, she had her “you’s” and “me’s” a little backwards.

Well one day Kristy and I heard this insect voice that sounded something like this *heeeeeeeelp yoooouuuuuu! Heeeeeeeelp yoooouuuu!* We couldn’t figure out what was going on and after searching the whole house we discovered the problem. We found the toy box with two little legs sticking straight out waving all over the place. Audrey was stuck upside down and she couldn’t get out. The toy box was her favorite place in the world and it had gobbled her up in one bite!

**Transition:** This is a great metaphor for us. You know, we need to understand our condition. Just like Audrey, we are all stuck, upside down, in a broken world and there is nothing on our own that we can do about it.

Unfortunately, I have to give you some bad news tonight. I hate doing it, but you have to be aware of what’s going on. I believe your very life depends on your willingness to understand what I share with you tonight. Here it is. We live in a sick world with sick people. And I don’t mean a few people or a lot of people. I mean every single person is sick. Just watch the news if you don’t believe me. As I speak to you right now there are over thirty wars being fought on our planet. People are killing each other left and right. People lie, they cheat, they steal. And here’s the worst news of all; you couldn’t find an innocent person on this earth to save your life. Everyone one of us is sick. We are all stuck upside down and we can’t get out. Why is our world so screwed up? Why do we make

so many mistakes? The answer's simple, hard to accept, but simple. Our hearts have gone astray and each of us has turned our back on God.

**Transition:** I need you to understand something. God's number one priority is the condition of my heart and your heart. Let me show you exactly what I mean.

## **II. Mark 2:1-12 – The Paralyzed man**

*A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now, some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

*Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this is was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (NIV)*

### A. Back to the time machine

Let's jump back into that time machine we've been using and head back a couple of thousand years to a place called Capernaum.

### B. The popularity of Jesus (verses 1,2)

When we arrive, we'll notice that a huge crowd has gathered at one of the local homes. Loads of people came out to hear Jesus speak. They clung to his every word. He was so popular there was no room for anyone else, not even outside the door! People couldn't get enough of Jesus!

### C. A little help from my friends! (verses 3,4)

While Jesus was speaking to the huge crowd, a few crazy guys got a wild idea. You see, they had a friend who was paralyzed and he couldn't walk. They decided that Jesus was just the man to fix the



problem. So they loaded their friend up on a stretcher and the four of them carried him all the way to the house where the crowd had taken over. Now, let me tell you something, these guys were determined. Either they really loved their friend or they were just plain tired of toting this guy around all the time. Either way, they were going to arrange a meeting between Jesus and their friend!

So these four guys, we'll call them the wild bunch, climbed up on to the roof of the house and began tearing a hole through the ceiling. Back then, the roof of a house was made of mud and twigs and grass and stuff like that. Eventually, they dug through the roof and they found themselves looking down at Jesus. Now can you imagine this scene? Jesus is telling stories like crazy to the big crowd and suddenly he feels dirt falling on his head! He looks up and he sees eight bulging eyes looking down at him. Before he knew it, there was a man being lowered down to him on a stretcher. The man couldn't move. He was paralyzed. Broken. Jesus looked up again, and there they were, those eight eyes staring down at him again with great anticipation.

#### D. Our sin is Jesus' priority (verses 5-9)

Can you imagine how they felt when Jesus looked at the man lying on the floor in front of him and he said, "Son, because of your faith, your sins are forgiven"? Do you think that's why they went to all that trouble? Is that why they hauled this guy across town, climbed on the roof, dug a hole through the ceiling and lowered this lump of dead weight down? I think they had other ideas. I think they were shocked! *What did he just say!? His sins are forgiven? No! No! No! Make him walk again! Make him dance again. Touch him! Do something! Work your magic Jesus! Come on! What's this sin stuff all about?*

But let me tell you, this statement by Jesus was gigantic. It communicates a couple of very important messages to us. It has an impact on you and me today. You see Jesus was more concerned about the condition of this man's heart and soul than he was his body and ability to walk. Jesus is in the business of restoring lives from the inside out! Walking is nothing compared to your eternity. I hope you heard that. Jesus is much more concerned about the condition of your heart and soul than he is in the way you look or walk. Jesus is deeply concerned about what's inside of you.

Jesus' statement also communicates his claim to be God. Only God had the authority to forgive sins and when Jesus forgave this man's sins, he was clearly claiming to be God.

Well, in the crowd that day, there were a few of the local religious leaders. These were the legalistic guys that always wanted to trap Jesus and string him up by his toes. But Jesus was always one step ahead. He was much too bright for these guys! Well, these religious leaders were totally flipped out of their minds when Jesus started forgiving sins as if he were God. *Woe, woe, woe there big boy! You can't do that! Only God can do that! You dirty rotten rat we oughtta'.....*

#### E. Jesus is God! (Verses 10-12)

So to make his point, Jesus looked down at the paralytic and he said, "Get up and walk." And he did, in front of the whole crowd! This guy got up and walked right out the door. In no time he and his buddies were dancing in the street, having a party! The creator of the universe had fixed him. He made him walk again. I can't help but wonder, which seemed the most important. Walking or experiencing forgiveness? I know what God thinks. I know what Jesus thought right then and there. It was nothing to make the paralyzed man walk, but it was huge to forgive his sins.

You see, God is much more interested in the condition of your heart than he is anything else. Your eternity is his priority. Unfortunately, our heart condition is bleak. Each of us is broken on the inside, but we seem to be more concerned with our outside. Let's take a look at what I mean.

**Power Point Presentation** Roman numerals III through VIII correspond to several slides within a power point presentation. A copy of each slide is included in the appendix.

### III. **Inside-out**

The problem we have is rooted deep on the inside of us. We tend to do our best to look good on the outside, but the inside, that's a whole different story.

#### A. The tip of the iceberg

What you see on the outside is a lot like the tip of an iceberg. You see only about ten percent of what's really there.

#### B. What lurks beneath

Beneath the tip of an iceberg you actually find a mountain the size of any mountain you'd see here in the Rockies. For each of us there is a mountain of stuff that lurks beneath our exterior: our thoughts, our emotions, our personality. All that we are is found beneath this exterior.

Ultimately, this is where we find the source of all our problems. It's a disease worse than any other disease known to man. It's a disease called sin!

#### **IV. Definition of SIN**

##### **A. The word sin**

The word *sin* finds its root in the Greek language. It was actually an archery term. Greek archers would go out to the range and string their bows and begin taking shots at the target on the other side of the field.

Every shot that hit the bulls-eye was considered perfect. It meant that the archer had hit the mark.

Every time the archer didn't hit a bulls-eye, it meant he missed the mark. They called this a sin. S-I-N.

##### **B. It's the same way for us.**

Any time we miss the mark, we commit a sin. But when do we miss the mark? We miss the mark any time we do something that goes against God's standard. Here are a few other ways we can define sin.

We commit a sin any time we choose to do things our way instead of God's way. It's a lot like my three-year- old son. I say don't put your hand on the hot stove, but he chooses to do it his way and he touches the stove. He chose his way over my way. And he suffers the symptoms of a burned hand.

We commit a sin any time we turn our back on God.

We commit a sin whenever we decide to take control of our lives from God. You see, God wants to be in a relationship with you and he wants to have control of the steering wheel. He knows what's best for us. But instead, we push the eject button and send God flying out of the car and we quickly take over the control. But we have no idea where we're going.

We commit a sin anytime we defy God or disobey him.

##### **C. There is a huge difference between SIN and SIN's.**

It's a lot like the difference between the symptoms of a disease and the actual disease. SIN is the disease and SIN's are the symptoms of the disease. Let me give you an example. If I have a bad cough, the cough

itself is not my problem. It's just a symptom of the flu that's infected my body.

## **V. How do I measure up?**

We like to compare ourselves to other people don't we? It's what we call the moral relative standard. It's the old comparison method. You know how it goes. *Man, I'm not nearly as bad as that John guy over there! Or... Wheeeeeew! I don't sleep around with nearly as many guys as she does!* So, I must be better! In fact, I'm a lot better. I am AOK!

Let's take a look at the most extreme range possible when it comes to the ol' comparison method. The ultimate range: Mother Theresa and Adolf Hitler.

Most definitely I am better than Adolf! And certainly, I've got to be better than those lousy criminals. Right?

Well, while I'm at it. I'm probably better than all those other immoral people too!

So, we'll put your picture here. Right next to Mother Teresa. Man, you are good!

## **VI. So, do I make the cut?**

So, according to my standard, the Bad, well, they're just gonna' have to go to Hell. Yikes!

But the Good, we're all gonna' make it. Right? Through the comparison method, I create my own standard. I decide what is good. I mean, come on, I'm a lot better than Adolf Hitler. Right?

## **VII. God's standard.**

Well, let's take a look at God's standard and see how we really measure up. Uh-oh! We have a serious problem here. Mother Theresa doesn't measure up.

So if she doesn't measure up, we definitely don't measure up.

Only perfection meets God's standard.

Roman's 3:23 - *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* If we miss the mark one time, then we have sinned. We are outside of perfection. We are infected and tainted with a disease called sin. Not only are we infected by this disease, we actually embrace it. We seem to be

magnetized to it. Instead of running from sin, we actually run to it. And just maybe, even at this point, a few of us think that we are innocent. Well, there's no escaping sin. Each of us is born into it. Just like a crack baby or an HIV infected child we are born with this condition.

A. Iodine Illustration –

Poor iodine into a clear bottle of water and demonstrate how the smallest amount taints the pure water. Just like the slightest drop taints this jar of water, the slightest sin taints us and keeps us from perfection, God's standard. I can tell you from my own life though, I've had more than a few tiny drops of SIN in my life. Maybe you're in the same boat with me. You see I don't meet God's standard. I'm anything but perfect. So what does that mean for me and for you?

### **VIII. Consequences of SIN**

A. Death - Romans 6:23 - *The wages of SIN are death....*

I know this is hard news and it probably makes a lot of you angry. But I need you to know, it's true. I can't tell you the pain it causes me to tell you this. I dread this message every time I have to give it. It's like hearing you're doctor tell you that cancer has invaded your body and your gonna' die. But I wouldn't tell you this if I didn't believe it was true and if I didn't believe you needed to know. I believe your very existence depends on what you do with this information. I know some of you think I'm crazy. *Dave has lost his mind!* My job is not to make you believe me. My job is to tell you the truth in the clearest, most understandable way I can. I hope that you know that you can trust me. I don't want you to die. I want you to live! B. A broken relationship with God is the consequence of our disease.

B. God is Holy – Illustration: Sterile operating room.

Nothing tainted or infected can enter the sterile operating room. It's the same way with God's Kingdom. Nothing tainted, nothing sinful can enter his domain.

We are infected.

And because of this infection we cannot enter the presence of God. We cannot have a relationship with him. There is a wall between God and us. **Use the door illustration.**

*There will be a real door and frame on stage. The door will be locked and I will demonstrate that there is no way through it or around it. We are separated from God.*

This is not the way it's supposed to be. We are created with a purpose. We are designed to be in a relationship with God.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Here's the bottom line. All of us are infected with this disease called sin and the outcome is horrific. Its consequence is death. You cannot repair this situation on your own. There's nothing you can do.

We're all stuck, upside down in that toy box and we can't get out.

### **A. Illustration: The emergency room patient.**

Let me show you what I mean. Picture a car wreck victim with broken bones, a punctured lung, internal bleeding and severe lacerations. As a doctor, you know you can save the patient, but you only have a very limited time to get this done. You wheel him into the emergency room and before you put the guy under anesthesia, he begins to speak to you in a low whisper. He says, "Don't worry Doc. Let me take care of this. I'll be OK. Just send me home." And you look at the patient and tell him he's going to die in a short time if you don't operate. But he refuses your help and he claims that he can do it all by himself. That's a picture of you and me. There's God's way and then there's our way. Why do we so often choose our way? Here's the truth friends: my way is no way at all. It's a dead end street. God's way is the only way. Let me share with you the second half of Romans 6:23. It says that the gift of God is eternal life. There is hope for us. There is life for us. But it will never be found apart from Jesus.

## **Talk 5**

Topic:	The Cross
Title:	Paid in Full!
Big Idea:	Jesus died in our place and paid for our sin.
Application:	Because of Jesus, you can choose life over death.

### **I. Introduction: Clint Almond**

Several years ago I was sitting in the Colorado Springs airport waiting to catch a flight to Dallas, Texas. I decided to call my wife and let her know I was on my way home. When I called, she gave me some horrific news. She told me there had been a terrible car wreck. The night before there was a party that a lot of my young high school friends had attended. A couple of guys from the local high school had decided to go out on a beer run. My friend Cory was driving the car. Clint was the passenger. At some point during the trip, Cory got into a race with another car and while traveling eighty MPH he lost control and slammed into a telephone pole. Clint flew through the windshield and hit the pole face first. He was gone in a split second. Just minutes earlier he was having a good time at the party. *Hey, we just need a little more beer to keep the party alive.*

Two days later I attended the funeral. There were 750 teenagers there. A bunch of young men and women that looked a lot like you. Life was just beginning for Clint, and it was already over. During the funeral there was literally weeping and wailing across the room. At the end of the service I waited at the door to greet all the kids. Once everyone departed, I went back to the sanctuary to look in on the family. At that moment, I witnessed one of the saddest scenes you could imagine. Clint's mother was standing next to the coffin and as she wept, she literally climbed into the casket with her son. She lay on top of him and she grabbed his face and she screamed in anguish. It was more than I could take. I watched the family pull her away.

I was struck at how deep and painful this thing called "sin" can be. The impact is often much greater than we can imagine. You have to understand. My sin and your sin impact those around us. When Cory Shelton went on one last beer run, he never imagined that he would end up killing his friend in the process. He never imagined that a mother's heart would be broken. Something has to be done about this disease called sin. It's destroying our world!

What do you think Clint's mom wanted more than anything as she held her son's face and wailed in agony? I'll tell you precisely what she wanted. She wanted him to come home one more time. She would have given anything to make it happen. That's exactly how God feels about us when we are separated from him. He longs for us to come home. He longs for us to have a relationship with him.

Please hear me when I say this. God has gone to the greatest effort, to the greatest length to get you to come home. He knew that we could never cure this disease called sin on our own. He knew the price we would have to pay. Death. Eternal death. And he decided to pay the price for us, me and you. God invaded planet earth in the form of Jesus with one great mission: to die for our sin and open the door that separates us from him.

**Transition:** Let me tell you what he did. But I'd like to tell you through the eyes of someone who was there.

## **II. The Crucifixion through the eyes of a Roman soldier**

At this point I will move into the character of a Roman soldier. I will move a few steps to the side and turn my back to the audience for a moment. During this time I will put on a jacket, hat and glasses. Rather than using extensive props I will primarily use dramatic effect to invoke the character adjustment. I will tell the story of Jesus' last day in retrospect and I will communicate the events in chronological order. I will begin the story as if I am referring to just another day on the job.

### Begin monologue

You know, it was really a morning like any other morning. I got up an hour before dawn and prepared my uniform. I ate a quick breakfast and kissed my wife goodbye. As I hurried off to the palace, I noticed the air felt a little cooler than usual and I could tell clouds were rolling in from a distance. It looked like a storm was brewing. Little did I know that this ordinary day was about to be anything but ordinary.

When I arrived in the courtyard tension was in the air. A couple of my men rushed to fill me in on the events that had taken place. It seemed a Jewish carpenter was in a lot of trouble. The rumor was he claimed to be God.

### A. Betrayed by his friends

I discovered that Jesus had been turned in by one of his closest friends. A guy named Judas turned him in for a few pieces of silver,



thirty to be exact. I hear most of his friends abandoned him once he was arrested. There was guy lurking around that looked a lot like one of his closest and loudest followers, but he kept denying he ever met Jesus. I'm not sure what kind of friends the carpenter from Nazareth had, but they didn't seem to be good ones that night!

#### B. A mock trial

I understand that they took Jesus to the religious leaders that night and they laughed at him and spit in his face. They held a fake trial and said he was guilty of a bunch of false charges. Then they drug him off to the Roman governor. They wanted Jesus dead! And according the law, only the governor could have him crucified.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor, he really thought that he was innocent. Over and over he offered Jesus back to the people. But they kept screaming for Pilate to crucify Jesus. It was mad chaos! Somehow all the religious leaders worked the crowd into a mad frenzy and Pilate finally gave in to the peer pressure and turned Jesus over to be flogged. He hoped this would be enough.

I arrived just in time to see the whole thing. It was brutal. The soldiers whipped Jesus with a cat-of-nine tails. They beat him without mercy. It was a horrible sight. The leather and stone and pieces of metal just ripped into his back and sides. I couldn't believe how much the crowd seemed to enjoy the torture. I'd seen this a lot, but some how, this day seemed worse.

#### C. Tortured by the company of soldiers

After Jesus was flogged, Pilate offered him back to the people, but they continued to yell, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" it still gives me chills. Finally, Pilate just washed his hands of everything and sent Jesus to the cross!

A company of soldiers took control of him at that point. They were my soldiers. I'm ashamed to tell you what happened next. I can't believe I took part in it. We began to beat him with a club and we kicked him over and over. He was already sliced to bits by the flogging, but we didn't care. We put a purple robe on him since that's what kings are supposed to wear. We mocked him and called him the king. As if that wasn't enough, one of my men came over with a crown, but this crown was made of thorns about an inch or two long. We shoved it onto his head and the thorns pierced his skin and blood poured over his face. The whole time, Jesus never resisted. Oh, he felt the pain, but he never screamed for mercy. He never tried to escape. He never even pulled away. I began to

sense that something was different about this man. He seemed like he was a man on a mission instead of a man about to be executed!

#### D. The Cross

We finally took his robe and placed the cross beam on his back and we began the journey to Golgotha. This was the hill where we carried out all our executions. The walk was at least a mile if not more. But it felt like a thousand.

Once we arrived, we nailed his hands and his feet to the cross. I couldn't believe what I saw. Again, he didn't resist. When the guards went to grab him and take him to the cross, he shook them off and walked on his own and he lied down on the cross and spread his arms wide. Nothing about this man seemed like a victim to me. I felt as though he was in control instead of me. He waited for the nails to rip through his body. All the while he gazed peacefully at the soldiers between each strike of the hammer.

As we raised him into the air, his eyes connected with mine. I looked for the anger, the pain, the hate, but all I saw was peace, love and mercy. I felt as though he felt sorry for me. His tender look warmed me in a way I can't describe. I found myself wishing I hadn't come into work that day or wishing that I had become a teacher or a doctor or anything but a soldier. I knew at that moment... I was crucifying an innocent man. An innocent man! His eyes didn't leave mine until the sudden pain of his wounds scraping against the splintered cross caused him to flinch in agony. Then several soldiers began throwing dice for his clothes. I was disgusted with them. More so, I was disgusted with myself.

He hung there for six hours. I couldn't take my eyes off of him. I found myself wanting to help, but I didn't know how. As the day drew on, dark-menacing clouds began to roll in. Eventually, the sky became black and nothing seemed normal. Finally, he screamed out with his last breath, "It is finished!" Then he died. His eyes shut and he was gone. At that moment, I looked upon his body and I whispered to myself, "Truly, this is the son of God". Since that moment, my life has never been the same. How could it be after something like that? How could it ever be the same again?

*At this point I will move a few steps to the side and with my back to the audience remove the jacket, hat and glasses. I will resume my normal character.*

### III. Application: Why did Jesus die?

#### A. He paid our debt

He is the only possible payment for our sin. Jesus was perfect, without sin. Let me show you what Jesus did for us. Do you remember the tainted water from last night? Let's take a look at this. When Jesus died on the cross, he died for the sin of the world. He created a situation so that we could be pure and untainted again. This is what I mean.

#### B. Iodine and bleach Illustration:

*I will mix bleach in with the water I "tainted" the previous day and the water will become clear again.*

#### C. The debt must be paid.

Somebody has to pay the debt I owe. Somebody has to pay the debt you owe. But the great news is this: It doesn't have to be you or me! Jesus has already paid the price in full. We just receive the gift. Now, you can refuse the gift if you want to. You can remain tainted if you like. But it doesn't have to be like that. We can be clean and pure again. And there is nothing that you could have ever done that's too big for Jesus to cleanse. Absolutely nothing.

#### D. Gift Illustration:

I will have a gigantic box wrapped up on stage as a present. Communicate to them that the present is already given. It just needs to be received. I will have \$50 inside the box and whoever decides to "receive" the gift can keep the money. Every kid in the house will wish they received the gift. I will compare this \$50 to eternity and challenge them to consider God's gift of eternal life.

#### E. Sin is removed.

When Jesus paid for our sin with his death, a perfect sacrifice, the wall we looked at yesterday was removed. The door is wide open. Yet, when we continue to embrace sin, our back is turned, and the door is no option to us. We have to receive the gift Jesus has given us. Without the gift of Christ's sacrifice, the door is as good as shut and our own sin separates us from God and eternity.

*I will use the same door from the previous talk and demonstrate how the door is open.*

#### **IV. Application:**

I want you to know that Jesus was not a victim. He was a volunteer. This wasn't forced upon him. He had a choice and he chose you. And he chose me! And he chose the cross to pay our debt. Why? Because he loves us unconditionally with no strings attached! Do you remember the goal I set for myself the first night we met? I mentioned that when you head back home on the last day of camp, that you will know exactly where you stand with Christ. It's not my job to make you believe what I believe. And you know what? If you don't believe the same things that I believe or your leader believes, we will love you and care for you just the same. And that's the truth. You can bank on it. Tonight, I want to make it as clear as possible where you stand with Jesus. He gave himself as a perfect sacrifice in death for us. He did it because he wants a relationship with us, a relationship that will last an eternity. This kind of sacrifice demands response.

So where do you stand with Jesus? At this moment, have you said yes or no? Have you accepted the gift and unwrapped it? Let me tell you about two guys who made very different decisions about Jesus.

#### **V. Conclusion: We all have a choice to make.**

##### **A. The two criminals on the cross: Luke 23: 32-43**

*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

*The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."*

*The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the King of the Jews, then save yourself."*

*There was a written notice above him that said, "This is the King of the Jews."*

*One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"*

*But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God" he said, "since you and I are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for*

*we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."*

*Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today, you will be with me in paradise." (NIV)*

One of the men rejects Christ and mocks him even in his own death. The other one however, looks at Jesus and says, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." He trusted Jesus and believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God. And Jesus looked into the dying man's eyes and he said, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Each of us today is hanging on one of those crosses. Either we trust in Jesus and we choose God's way or we reject Jesus and we choose our own way. There is no in between. You either say yes or you say no. There is no maybe.

I don't have a funny story to end with tonight. I just have one simple question. Which cross are you on?

*I will end with a video from the passion played with the song, "I Would do Anything" by Third Day.*

(The text to the song is found in the appendix.)

## **Talk 6**

Topic: Resurrection and Appropriation

Title: Coming Home

Big Idea: Jesus is no myth. He's alive and well.

Application: You can trust Jesus with your life.

### **I. Introduction: You are my hero!**

*The purpose of this introduction is to personally draw them into the moment. My desire is to make them feel like they are the “heroes” of the week. No one else. Not the speaker. Not the program team. Not even their leaders. I will use this opportunity to point out some great moments in camp where kids did things no one ever thought they could do. I will transition in to the resurrection pointing out that no one really believed that Jesus would rise from the dead the way he did.*

All right everyone! I've got a big question for you! Did anyone do something this week that no one ever thought you could do? Or just maybe, that you didn't think you could do? Yeah, I see a lot of heads nodding up and down out there. Let me tell you a few things I saw this week. Casey from Seattle, you didn't think you could make it through that obstacle course did you? But you made it! Let's all give Casey a big hand! And James from Portland, nobody ever thought you'd drink that gallon of milk, but you did it in ten minutes! Man, that's got to be a Guinness world record! Let's give James a hand! James, I don't think your leader thought you'd ever stop throwing up all that cottage cheese either!

Laura from Spokane, where are you girl?! There you are! Stand up! Laura, how long did you and I stand up there on the high dive at the ropes course? One hour? Two hours? Man, did you ever think you'd be able to jump off that thing? But you did it! You really did it! I know you surprised yourself and a few others. But you didn't surprise me. I want you to know that we are all proud of you. Laura, you're my hero! Let's give Laura a round of applause.

You know, this week all of you did some amazing stuff. You did the ropes course, the zip line, you took me down and beat the snot out of me in the pool Olympics and everybody knows that's no easy task. In my book all of you are heroes!

Each night this week I've been telling you stories about another hero, Jesus. The last time we took a look at Jesus, he was hanging on a

cross, beaten, tortured and dead. The stories that inspire us are the ones where people overcome the odds and make great comebacks. It's the US Olympic hockey team winning the gold. It's Lance Armstrong beating cancer and winning seven straight Tours. These are the stories that make our hearts beat fast. Well, let me tell you, if you want to see a real hero in action, just take a look at Jesus. This is the greatest comeback of all time!

## **II. The Resurrection**

### **A. The burial of Jesus.**

When Jesus was removed from the cross, he was placed in a tomb. The tomb was closed shut by a huge rock that could only be rolled out of the way with the help of several people. But it could only be rolled away from the outside. It also had a wax seal plastered to it to. This way, no one could try to enter the tomb to steal the body without breaking the seal. Now, obviously, Jesus had been no ordinary sort of guy. So despite the fact that he was dead, a giant rock locked Jesus' body into a tomb, and there was a wax seal in place, the Romans decided to take no chances. For fear of his body being stolen they placed several guards outside of Jesus' grave. They were going to make sure that nothing went wrong. But something did go wrong!

### **B. The Empty Tomb. Mat. 28: 1-15**

*After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move.*

*The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.*

*"Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message."*

*The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees,*

*embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there." (The Message)*

I want to take a moment to read this story to you. I can't do it justice on my own. Now, keep in mind, you're gonna' think you just stepped into the wardrobe and entered Narnia when you hear this. The special effects are wicked! But, they're not special effects. This stuff is real!

### C. Jesus is alive! Mt. 28: 1-10

When these two showed up at the tomb, to say they were shocked, well that's the understatement of the year! Apparently, when an angel of the Lord appears, he makes quite an entrance. I mean, we've got an earthquake, bolts of lightning, shimmering white clothes! But the greatest surprise of all: Jesus is alive! He's not in the tomb! These ladies are completely blown away. Jesus has conquered death. The stone didn't stop him. The roman seal didn't stop him. The guards certainly didn't stop him. They're still so shocked they can't even move! And wildest of all, death did not stop him!

After seeing the Angel of the Lord and an empty grave, these Tomb Raiders, Mary and Mary, rushed back to tell the boys what happened. But on the way they were in for one more shock. Jesus! In living color! When they saw him, they fell at his feet and wrapped their arms around his legs and they worshiped him, which means they believed he had truly raised from the dead. They sat there and held on for dear life! It was as if they were afraid Jesus would leave them again. But Jesus told them, "Don't be afraid." And he sent them off to round up his friends and let them know that he was alive!

### **III. Application – So what? What does this have to do with me?**

I know this all sounds a little crazy to some of you. Many of you may have never heard a lot or most of this. The first time I heard it all I was amazed. I was amazed that I had never heard the whole story. Oh, I had heard of God and Jesus and a crucifixion. I had even heard that Jesus was resurrected. But I didn't know what it all meant. The pieces of the puzzle had never come together for me. But on a night a lot this it all came clear. And then I was even more amazed that I believed this was what I needed more than anything else. More than food. More than shelter. More than air. I knew I needed a personal relationship with this guy named Jesus.



I'm sure a lot of you are thinking, "So what? What does this mean for me?" Well, that's a great question. Let me tell you what it means for you.

A. Jesus is God.

If Jesus really rose from the grave and conquered death, it means that he is exactly who he claimed to be: God. On many occasions Jesus actually claimed to be God. Now, a lot of people through out history have made claims to be God. But not a single one of them could back up the claim, because not a single one of them were God. You can look at any world religion and you'll find their founder, leader, great master, prophet or whatever you want to call them and you'll find them dead. And if you look inside their graves, you'll find their bones, because none of them were God. Only Jesus claimed to be God and proved it by kicking the stuffing out of death and walking out of the grave alive and well.

B. Jesus: liar, lunatic or God

C. S. Lewis, the author of the *Lion the With and the Wardrobe*, wrote that Jesus could be only one of three things. Either he was a liar, a lunatic, or he was God. You see, Jesus clearly claimed to be God, so you can't just say he was a great teacher or a moral man or just a really nice guy. I can't go around telling everybody that I'm a brain surgeon or the president of the United States if I'm not. That would be lying, unless I really believed it and that would be a sure sign that I'm a couple of houses short of a suburb and I need some professional help. Well, that's the situation we find with Jesus. Either he's a liar and everybody who believes he was a great guy needs to reevaluate what a great guy really is. Or, in fact, Jesus was a loony toon and millions of people have been severely duped by trusting this wacko. Or he is exactly who he claimed himself to be: God in the flesh! If I'm a betting man, and I am, I'm putting every penny on the resurrected Jesus. Why, because he backed up his claim. He proved it. He conquered death!

C. This is something you can believe in.

You've heard me say it several times, what we need more than anything is purpose and fulfillment. Yet, we look in all the wrong places. We keep trying to fill this God shaped vacuum with everything except the one thing that really works, Jesus. You need to look no further. Your search is over if you want it to be. You can trust Jesus with your life.

#### **IV. The evidence demands a verdict.**

I need you to know that Jesus, his birth, his life, his death and most certainly his resurrection are not a myth or legend. This story is no tall tale, fable or fiction. It's just the opposite. It's real life. It's documented history. Jesus was as real and alive as you and I are today. His miracles really happened. His words, he really said them. His resurrection, it really happened. So many people never take the time or never have the opportunity to put this all together in one clear picture. But this week you've heard it all. Friends, I've gotta' tell you; the evidence of Jesus life is overwhelming. For over two thousand years people have tried to prove that Jesus was at most just another historical figure. But no one has ever succeeded. In fact, many scholars and intellectuals who've set out to prove that Jesus was a big fat joke ended up giving their lives to him. Let me touch on just a few pieces of evidence that help prove the life and claims of Jesus.

##### A. Jesus appeared at least eleven times.

It's documented by eyewitnesses that Jesus appeared at least eleven times after his resurrection. Eleven times! And these are just ones that we're sure of. He could have appeared several more times in the forty days after he walked out of the grave.

##### B. Over 500 witnesses.

In the eleven times that he showed himself, over five hundred people actually saw him. Five hundred people! Now how do we contradict that kind of testimony?

##### C. No other religion compares.

As I mentioned before, if you look for the leaders of all other world religions, you'll find their bones rotting away in a grave. None of them have ever claimed to be God and proved it. Whether it's Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith or L. Ron Hubbard. They're all dead and buried, but not Jesus.

##### D. The power of a changed life.

I believe the greatest evidence of all is the power of a changed life. Millions of people, many of them a lot smarter than me, have experienced personal relationships with Jesus Christ and their lives have been changed forever. You heard my story just a few nights ago. My life made a 180-degree turn when I came face to face with Jesus. He took out my vile heart and gave me a new one! People who knew me then know

something wild has definitely happened in my life. When I went to my high school reunion I was voted “Most Unlikely Career”! None of the guys I went to school with would ever let me hang out with their kids. No way! But the ones who know what I know, they understand. They know that Jesus is in the business of changing lives and working miracles. He’s in the business of using maniacs like me and maniacs like those guys on the top row up there from Tucson. And those wild men from Denver! And those crazy girls from Fresno. Yeah, that’s right. God wants to change you from the inside out and use you to change the world!

## **V. So, what’s your objection?**

All the evidence, all you’ve heard this week, it demands a response from you. It demands a verdict. Jesus wants you to make a stand. I promised you the very first night that you would know where you stand with Jesus when you leave this camp. It’s not my job to make you believe what I believe. I will care for you and your leaders will care for you no matter what you believe. You may think I’m full of it, and that won’t hurt my feelings one bit. You see, our job is to tell you the story of Jesus the best way we can through our words and most importantly, through our actions. Ultimately, the choice is yours and we will respect you and care for you no matter what you believe. My commitment to you is unconditional. Your leader’s commitment to you is unconditional. But at the end of the day, you are either for Christ or against Christ. There is no in between. There is no maybe.

Now, I know a lot of you still have objections. Let’s talk about a few of them.

### **A. I’m not good enough.**

A lot of you also don’t feel like you’re good enough. In your mind you believe you just can’t make the cut. But guess what? None of us can. All on our own, none of us are good enough. Yet God wants a real relationship with you and me. Once we’ve received the gift of Christ’s death in our place, we are restored and pure in the eyes of God. Remember, you are his greatest creation. He loves you and longs for you to come home. Remember, your perspective and God’s perspective are two totally different things. Through Christ, through his sacrifice, God has made it possible to be more than good enough!

### **B. What about all the others?**

So often we worry about all the other people in the world. But at this point, before we trust Christ with our life, we are powerless to help the others. God is a really big God. I mean, he created the universe! He

can handle all the others. Ultimately, if you want to help the rest of the people around the world, join the team. God is eager to use you!

C. I want to wait till I'm older.

There are also a few of you thinking that you'd just like to wait until you're older. You know, this is adult stuff or maybe this is just all too heavy right now. Or, you just don't have time for it. But if this whole thing is true, if Jesus really is God and can really give you purpose and fulfillment and everything else fails, why would you ever want to wait? This is not meant to scare you or rattle your cage, but you have to know that life is short. There are no guarantees. This message is both urgent and timely. Please don't make a decision out of emotion, but please don't wait if you suspect this stuff is for real.

D. I don't want to change.

One of the most common objections to following Jesus is also the least likely one to be spoken. Remember, the first night I said I would tell you the truth and you said, "Dave, you hunka' burnin' love, tell me the truth!" So here it is. "I don't want to change." It's that plain and simple. So many of us just don't want to change. We don't want to give up our lifestyle. We don't want to give up our parties or our boyfriends or girlfriends. We don't want to give up all the things that make us feel good for a moment, even though they always fail us in the end. If some of you feel pegged right now, it's because you are. But you need to know that I feel your pain. Man, that was easily my biggest objection. I didn't want to give up sex. I didn't want to give up my future. I didn't want to give up my way. Oh yeah, I had heard about Jesus, but I didn't want anything to do with him if he was going to inconvenience me. But let me tell you what happened. The night I listened to the whole story, when the puzzle came together, I didn't have a choice. I couldn't help myself. I knew that I wanted to know Jesus. I was a student at Texas A&M in College Station, Texas. I was at a Young Life meeting and a man in a black Harley Davidson shirt with a gray beard told us that God became a man in the form of Jesus. And that he lived the perfect life and was crucified in my place. And that on the third day he rose from the grave and conquered death and that he longed for a relationship with me! Man, it captured me and it wouldn't let go. On the way to my Jeep in the parking lot I made a decision to become a follower of Christ. I could not help myself. I had to believe because I knew deep down in my heart and soul that it was true. So I got in my jeep, drove home and jumped into bed with the girl I was engaged to and living with at the time. Immediately after our encounter I began to cry. Something cracked inside of me. The next night the same happened again and she looked at me and asked, "What is the wrong with you?" And I looked at her and said, "We can never do this again. I

can't touch you like this again." Did you hear that? Something had happened to me. I was different. I was changed. But how? Did I change me? Did I change myself in a short drive home? No. God changed me. He changed my heart from the inside out. I want you to know that you don't have to change yourself. God will change you. Please don't misunderstand. Will you make mistakes? Yes. Will it be difficult? Yes. Most importantly, is it worth it? Absolutely!

E. I don't know enough.

Many of you feel like you don't know enough. Let me reassure you, you have the information you need to make a decision. If you feel like you have to know every detail and every fact, well, that may take your lifetime and a couple of more and you still probably won't get there. It's OK to have questions. It's OK to still wonder and ponder. But you'll never get every question answered the way you want it answered. Trust me. I still have plenty of questions. But I know that the story of Jesus is true and life changing. A significant part of my own personal journey with Christ is asking questions and seeking out answers. But my questions make Jesus no less real. In fact, it makes him all the more real for me.

## **VI. Responding to Jesus.**

A. Reactions to the resurrection.

So, how do you respond to the resurrection of Christ? Either you believe it's the truth or you're still pondering it all or you don't believe it all. All of these are just honest answers. I know that all of you are wired differently. You process things in your own way. It was the same way 2000 years ago.

i) John believed immediately. John 20:8

Let me tell you about John, one of Jesus' closest friends. When he heard the tomb was empty, he raced down to the graveyard. And when he got there, he stepped into the tomb and saw that the body was missing. And the scriptures say that he "believed immediately." He didn't need any other proof. He believed immediately. Some of you feel exactly the same way.

ii) The guards denied Jesus' resurrection. Mt. 28: 11-15

We see a completely different reaction from the guards who were stationed at the tomb. Even though they were eyewitnesses, they accepted a bribe to deny what they had seen. People today are no

different. We know the truth deep down, but we would rather deny it than have to face it.

iii) For Thomas, seeing was believing.

Jesus had appeared at one point to most of his disciples, but one of them, Thomas, was not around. When the others told Thomas they had seen Jesus, he didn't believe them. He said he would have to see Jesus for himself. Let me read to you what happened after that:

*Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you."*

*Then he focused his attention on Thomas. "Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don't be unbelieving. Believe."*

*Thomas said, "My Master! My God!"*

*Jesus said, "So, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing." John 20: 26-29 (The Message)*

Did you hear Thomas' reaction to Jesus? "My Master! My God!" I believe Thomas had been broken over Jesus' death and didn't understand that he rose from the dead. But when he saw Jesus he worshipped him. He called him God. I can't help but think that Thomas was a little disappointed in himself for needing to see Jesus face to face after all they'd been through together. Some of you may want to make the same kind of demand. Well, you can tell that Jesus was ready for you even then as he told Thomas that "even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing." I have to warn you. Jesus doesn't typically pop into rooms anymore and ask people to touch his wounds. He's already done all of that. But I promise you this; if you really want to experience Jesus, ask him to reveal himself to you and he will. If you sincerely want him to, Jesus will find a way to reveal himself to you and he says that we will be more blessed than Thomas because we can believe without seeing.

B. It's as easy as ABC!

So what's your response? Do you think it's true? Do you deny it even though that little voice in the back of your head says it's true? Do you just need some time to think about it? Well, I'd like to give you just that in few minutes. After we're done, you'll have about twenty minutes alone again like last night. But tonight, if you if you feel like you want to

become a Christ follower, if you are convinced that this story of Jesus is true and that he is the real deal, then I'd like to help you process that in your time alone. It's really as easy as ABC!

- i) Admit – First we just have to admit to God that we are in need. In your own words, in your own voice, just let God know that you're broken and long for purpose and fulfillment.
- ii) Believe – Secondly, you just need to tell God that you believe that Jesus died for you and rose from the grave.
- iii) Commit – Finally, you need to commit your life to following Jesus. Let God know that you want to know him and follow him. Ask him to change you and lead you and he will. Get ready.

#### C. It's a free gift!

This relationship with Jesus is a free gift. All you have to do is receive it. You can do nothing to earn it. It's all yours free of charge. Remember the door? Remember how it was locked and sealed and there was no way through? Not any more! This baby is wide open! There is no longer separation from God!

*For humorous effect, I will walk through the door on stage several times.*

#### D. God's perspective.

Let me remind you of what you look like in God's eyes at this point. You are pure and blameless. Christ has washed away all that has tainted you.

*I will demonstrate the iodine illustration one last time.*

### **VII. Coming home!**

For many of you it's time to go home. I'm not talking about your hometown. I'm talking about your "forever" home. Jesus wants you to come home to him. Just like you are. Right now. Right here at Malibu. Jesus wants you to know him. Let me paint the picture for you with a story by Phillip Yancey:

*(I will read an excerpt from What's so Amazing About Grace. A copy of this is found in the appendix.)*

Friends, that's the picture of our heavenly Father as well. He wants you to come home. He desires to be in relationship with you. He longs for

you to let him love you unconditionally. So He comes to you right now, offering you His forgiveness and a relationship if you'll just receive his free gift of life and follow Him. I'm here to tell you the truth. God became a man in the form of Jesus. He lived a perfect life. He was crucified for our sin. He conquered death and rose from the grave. His love for you demands a response. He wants you to come home. What will you say to him tonight?



## Talk 7

Topic: A Life with Christ

Title: Seize the Day!

Big Idea: You are not alone; cling to Christ!

Application: Your focus on Christ is essential to your survival.

### I. Introduction – Simon Says!

Wow! This is our last time together as a big happy family! Unbelievable! It seems like you just pulled up and now you're off and leaving me! Don't cry for me! I'll survive. I just need a moment. Wheeeew! All right! I'm ready now! The first night I promised you we'd have serious adventure and we have had some serious adventure haven't we!? Well, in the name of good times and high adventure, I thought we'd end the week in a high-octane game of *Simon Says* on steroids! Soooooooooo, for all you brainiacs that skipped elementary school and started life in the seventh grade, here's how it goes.

*At this point I will explain the rules of the game. This is really just like ordinary Simon Says. The only difference is the outrageous things Simon says to do. You can use your imagination on this. Keep it crazy, but keep it appropriate. If you're not a strong spontaneous leader and your not comfortable controlling a little chaos, this intro is not for you. The two key points for success are to whittle the audience down to one winner and do it in a very efficient manner. You don't want the game to linger.*

You know, as fun as that game was to play and as funny as it was to watch you play it, there's a huge lesson that I want you to take home from it. When you get home tomorrow after that short sixteen-hour bus ride, you will be walking back through the doorway of your old life. And in that old life, you will have many Simon's whispering in your ear telling you what to do. You see, you've just had a week in paradise! You've had adventure, made new friends, learned about yourself and most importantly, many of you decided to become Christ-followers! But the world you came from, nothing's changed. It's still the same old thing.

The same opportunities will come knocking at your door. Ladies, your boyfriend is waiting for you to come home. And let me tell you, he's got some ideas. Are you going to be a princess? Gentlemen, there's going to be a party Friday night and all the boys are gonna' expect you there? Are you going to be a knight? What will you do? Who will you be? Let me help you here. Be who God has called you to be. You are royalty. You are valuable. You have purpose and meaning. You don't need that stuff.

Carpe Diem! Does anybody know what Carpe Diem means? That's right. It means seize the day! Don't let somebody else seize your day! You seize it! You take it! You be the leader! And let me tell you a secret. You're not alone. Jesus is with you every step of the way. So here's the question; how do you seize the day? How do you do it? Here's the answer; you cling to Jesus and you don't let go. You hold onto him like a rabid bulldog and don't let go! Believe me, the storm will come! The winds will blow and your earth will shake. What will you do? Let's take a look at Peter and see what he did.

## **II. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Mt. 14:22 - 33**

*As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people. With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.*

*Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared out of their wits. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.*

*But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."*

*Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water."*

*He said, "Come ahead."*

*Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!"*

*Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, "Faint-heart, what got into you?"*

*The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, "This is it! You are God's Son for sure!"*

### **A. A busy day! V. 22, 23**

As we take a look at Peter, I've got to get you into the scene. Here's what's up. Jesus has just had a busy day. He's just been responsible for catering a meal to 5000 people. And he did it with five loaves of bread and two fish! Now, if you know anything about whipping up an omelet or

two, feeding 5000 people with two fish is quite a feat. So, you can imagine the clean up after a meal like this. At the end of the day, Jesus needed a little “alone” time! And who could blame him?

So, he sends his buddies on across the lake and says he’ll meet them later. At this point, Jesus climbs up on the mountain by himself to pray.

#### B. The storm will come. V. 24

Meanwhile back at the ranch, the disciples are off in the boat and a storm starts to brew. Now, if anybody can find a storm, these guys can. They have a knack for it I think. The scriptures tell us that the wind had come up upon them and they were being battered by the waves.

So, when you get home, do you think the wind will stir up and the waves will batter you? You have to know they will. You see life is lived in the valley, not on the mountaintop. And in the valley, the storms settle in and the river over flows. It’s just the way it is. Yeah, there are sunny bright days, but who you are when the rains come, these are the moments that define you.

##### i) Jesus walks on water. V. 25-27

As the wind and the waves beat down on the disciples in the boat, Jesus comes onto the scene! Now, you’d expect someone to show up on a lake in a boat or maybe a cool jet-ski, but not Jesus. He arrives by foot. Did you hear that? Jesus is walking on the water out to the disciples! He has no regard for the wind and the waves. When the guys in the boat see him, they are, for good reason, quite shocked! In fact, the scriptures say that they were terrified and cried out in fear. They thought they were seeing a ghost!

But it’s not a ghost. It’s Jesus and this is just another day in the life of the creator of the universe; showing up to save the day and showing up in style! Now, maybe he could have conjured up a boat, but who wouldn’t want to walk on water? And I’m sure it was quite a kick to scare the bejeebers out of Peter and the boys! I can’t help but think that Jesus may have laughed a bit as he yelled out, “Take courage! It’s me! Jesus!”

##### ii) Peter walks on water. V. 28-32

When Peter hears Jesus’ voice he gets a great idea. He decides to take a stroll on the waves as well. So he yells out to Jesus, “Lord! If it’s

you, then tell me to come out on the water with you!” And Jesus tells him, “Come on out!”

Now, Peter takes his shot at walking on water. Can you see him putting his leg over the side of the boat? Was he a little shaky, maybe a little timid? You know, it says right here that Peter jumped out of the boat and walked over to Jesus! Now Peter is my kind of guy. He doesn't hesitate. He isn't timid! He just jumps out of the boat! He believes in Jesus!

Now, my question for you: When the storm hits, will you be willing to get out of the boat? Will you jump into the water? Let me show you what that looks like in everyday terms for you. When everybody else in your class decides to cheat on a test because it's too hard or they're too lazy, what will you do? Will you cheat? Or will you get out of the boat and do what's right? Guys, when you see someone weaker getting picked on and harassed, what will you do about it? Will you join in or will you defend that person? Ultimately, here's what I'm asking, when no one else will stand, will you stand? When no one else cares, will you care? When no one else will tell the truth, will you tell the truth?

Sacrifice, now that's a word! Sacrifice, that's what I'm talking about here. When we get out of the boat and fight against the wind and the waves we discover what sacrifice means. We give up our own security. We give up our own comfort. We give up our own welfare. And we give it up because Jesus gave it up for us. Yeah, you may lose some cool points. You may lose your reputation. You may even feel some pain. But at the end of the day, you discover purpose and fulfillment.

Not many people are willing to get out of the boat. What did all of Pete's friends do? That's right. They stayed in the boat. They didn't want to mess around out there in the water. Man, it's cold and wet out there! A brother could catch a cold or drown or something out there! Uh uh! I don't want any of that! Now, I'm not here to beat down on the guys in the boat. At least they were there. But I am saying that you will find yourself sitting in a very crowded boat if you choose to sit there. But the path of walking on water will give you plenty of elbowroom! But you will not be alone. You will not be alone!

So what's it like the first time you walk on water? What does it take to be successful? Well, let me tell you. Keep your eyes on Jesus. When we lose our focus, we lose our balance. This is just plain old common sense. Keep your eye on the ball. Just ask Peter. The moment he shifted his eyes from Jesus to the waves and the wind he began to sink. You know what, the same thing will happen to all of us every now and then. We all lose our focus at some point. But that's a lousy reason

to stay in the boat! What happens when we sink? What happens when we slip and fall? We cling to Jesus! Just like Peter, we call out his name, because we are never alone.

When Peter called out for Jesus, Jesus reached out immediately and pulled him out of the water. He didn't hesitate. You see, we can and should get out of the boat and take risks. We have to seize the day! I don't think Peter ever regretted jumping out of that boat. When he was old and gray he was still telling that story.

#### C. Jesus, the Son of God! V. 33

After Jesus grabbed Peter and pulled him out of the water, they walked back to the boat. I'm sure Peter was clinging to Jesus then! I'm also sure that every step was majestic for Peter. When they stepped into the boat the winds and waves died down. At that moment, having seen it all, the disciples worshipped Jesus and exclaimed, "This is it! You are God's son for sure!" I gotta' tell you, that statement sums up the week for us here at Malibu. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He commands the winds and the waves. He healed the blind and the sick. He brought the dead back to life, and he conquered death. Jesus was both divine, meaning that he was God, and he was human. Hey friends, this is it. Jesus is your answer, for sure!

### **III. The adventure continues.**

In the beginning of the week I said we'd experience adventure, discover relationships and hear the truth. Well, we've done it all. But it doesn't stop here. It can't stop here. I hope that this week is a beginning for you. So many of you will look back at Malibu as that time and place when your life really began. This will be a turning point in your life or a monumental memory, because this is the place where you received the free gift of Jesus love and became a Christ-follower.

#### A. For the Christ followers.

Let me take these last few moments to give you a few thoughts on living life in the valley. I know many of you are nervous or maybe even afraid of going back to the places you came from. But these are the places that you will make a difference in our world! Yeah, I know those voices will whisper in your ear. I know that temptation will pull at you. I know that you will make mistakes. But remember Peter's adventure out onto the water. Keep your eyes on Jesus and cling to him. When you lose your focus, call out to him and he will come to you. Most importantly, whenever you slip and fall don't ever think the adventure is over. Don't ever think that you can't come home. That's not the truth. It's a lie! God

always wants you back. He always wants you to return to him. Does this mean we should go crazy and make every mistake possible? No way! The very love and compassion that God offers us is the very reason we should be motivated to love him back. But no matter what you do, God will love you no less. You are always his greatest creation, even on a bad day.

B. For the curious.

I realize several of us this week made a decision to not become Christ-followers as of yet. I want you to know from the very bottom of my heart, I am so glad you came here this week. And I want to thank you for your openness to listen and evaluate and think about this stuff. You've been very kind and respectful and I want you to know that I respect your right to choose. I want to applaud you for not making a snap decision and for not doing something just because someone else did. This has to be something you own. Please know that your Young Life leader would like to hang out with you back home no matter what you believe. When I say we care about you and love you with no strings attached, I mean it. We are passionate about you and your life. But you also have to know that I believe you being here is no accident. I believe there are many of you who will feel those tugs on your heart and soul. You'll hear that voice grow louder in the back of your mind. When you're ready, I want to challenge you to ask Jesus to reveal himself to you and he will.

**IV. A time of exhortation**

Man, I can't believe I have to say this, but it's time for us to leave this place. Ohhhh, how I hope it was the best week of your life. I will not forget my time with you. I will not forget your laughter and your smiles or the tears you've shed. I will not forget this adventure. You can bank on that. Right now, you are my favorite thing in the whole world! This is a great moment!

Before we leave, let me remind you once again, what God sees when he sees you. And let me remind you who you're made to be. Let's all stand for this. At the end, we'll close with one last song together and I'll pray for you.

*Once everyone is standing I will begin.*

Ladies, when God sees you, he sees a princess. Don't ever forget it. To him, you are always beautiful. And you are always accepted. And you will always find security in knowing that the creator of the universe loves you. And he will never turn you away.

Gentlemen, when God sees you, he sees a knight in shining armor. Don't you ever forget it. To him, you are magnificent and you are capable. You are strong and powerful. He always wants you on his team.

All right, if everybody will repeat after me.

Dave, you hunk of burning love! *Repeat*

I am a person of integrity! *Repeat*

I am a person of courage! *Repeat*

I am a person of honor! *Repeat*

With God's help, I can change the world! *Repeat*

**V. Close with *Fly Like an Eagle***

*The words to this song are in the appendix. The purpose of this moment is to both end on a high note and create a time of closure.*

## DAVID EARL MARTIN

## PERSONAL VITA

David was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 5, 1965. After several moves across Louisiana and Texas, David went to high school in Longview, Texas. After graduating in 1983 he joined the U.S. Marine Corps and was stationed in California, Hawaii, Korea and Japan.

David was honorably discharged as a Sergeant in 1987. After his military service David attended Texas A&M University and received a Bachelor of Arts in communication and a Master of Education in Outdoor Education. A year before finishing graduate school, David joined the staff team of Young Life. He has been on Young Life staff since 1993.

While serving as an area director in Garland, Texas, David attended Dallas Theological Seminary and graduated in 2001. In 2002 he entered the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where he plans to graduate in January 2007.

As Young Life's European Regional Director, David lives in Munich, Germany with his wife Kristy, three daughters Audrey, Abby, Anna and his son Drew.



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